TextAloud 2.0 User's Manual

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1.0 Introduction

Welcome to the TextAloud 2.0 User's Reference Manual. This document will help you get the most out of TextAloud. TextAloud (formerly called "TextAloud MP3") 2.0 is a powerful text to speech (speech synthesis) tool for computers running all versions of Windows 95 and later (NOTE: Some voices and functions may not be available on Windows 95). TextAloud enables almost any text to be listened to using your computer or portable audio devices. By reading this manual completely, you'll understand the power and features of TextAloud, allowing you to fully take advantage of its capabilities.

This manual will reference command buttons and menu actions available with TextAloud. When referencing menu commands, the commands will be shown in bold using the convention **File->Exit** for example. This indicates you should select **File** on TextAloud's main menu, then the **Exit** item on the sub-menu that is displayed. Whenever buttons are references, the convention **<OK>** will be used. In this case, indicating you click the button labeled OK. Also, the term TTS will often be used as an abbreviation for Text To Speech.

In addition to this manual, there are several other information sources available to you:

- http://www.nextup.com – Our site provides product information and purchase links, as well as downloads of the latest version of TextAloud.

- support@nextup.com – Email us at any time with any questions you have. You'll find that we provide very quick and helpful responses to all email questions.

- http://nextup.com/mailinglist.html - Signup for the NextUp.com Monthly Newsletter, as well as read back issues of our Newsletter. We typically provide a tip of the month for getting more out of TextAloud, along with any info about updates and changes to the product.

- http://nextup.com/phpBB2/index.php - Our User Forum is a gathering place for TextAloud enthusiasts. Many of our existing users are more than willing to provide help regarding TextAloud and solving any problems or answer questions you may have.

- TextAloud includes a comprehensive help file available via **Help->Contents** on the TextAloud main menu, or by pressing **F1** on your keyboard within most TextAloud windows.

2.0 Quick Start Guide

This section provides a very quick overview of basic TextAloud operation. More details on everything discussed in this section are provided later in this manual.

Installing TextAloud

TextAloud can be installed from purchased CD or via download from

http://nextup.com/TextAloud/download.html

If installing from download, visit the URL above and download the TextAloud installer .exe file. Running this file will guide you through installation.

If installing from CD, click the TextAloud entry on the CD menu to install.

NOTE: When installing a newer version of TextAloud onto a computer with TextAloud already installed, you do not need to uninstall the older version first. TextAloud will automatically be updated and previous settings retained. Also, if you have purchased TextAloud, regardless of whether installing from CD or internet, if you haven't previously, you must enter the registration code you receive via email after purchasing into the opening screen of the program to disable the time limit of demo mode.

Speaking the First Time

When you first install TextAloud, the first thing to do is get it to speak a few words just to make sure installation went well and everything is working. TextAloud will be pre-loaded with a sample article. Simply click the **<Speak>** button, or select **Speak->Speak Current Article** on the main menu to get TextAloud to talk. After this introductory article is spoken, you can move on to learning more about how to use the program.

Four Ways to Load Text

There are four main ways to load your text into TextAloud:

- **Clipboard Watching** – TextAloud can automatically monitor the Windows clipboard. Anytime you copy text by highlighting it and hitting Control-C, TextAloud can import the text. Select **Options->TextAloud Options->Clipboard Options** for settings related to this.

- **File->Open** – By using this main menu entry, TextAloud can directly open text files and documents in .txt (plain text files), .rtf (rich text files), .html (locally saved web documents), .doc (MS Word Documents), and .pdf (Adobe Acrobat Files).

- **Using HotKeys** – See **Options->HotKey Setup** for a variety of global HotKeys you can setup. When working in any program, you can highlight text and press a HotKey to have TextAloud speak or import text.

- **Manual Creation** – By right-clicking in the text area of TextAloud, then choosing **New Article** on the popup menu, or choosing **File->New Article** on the main menu, TextAloud will create a blank article, allowing you to type or paste in text manually.

Internet Explorer Plug-In

TextAloud now includes an Internet Explorer Plug-In. After installing TextAloud, if you'll restart Windows, you can then select **View->Toolbars->TextAloud** in Internet Explorer's main menu, you can display the TextAloud toolbar within Internet Explorer. This toolbar allows you to directly speak text within Internet Explorer.

Optional Premium Voices

TextAloud supports a variety of voices for almost every need. NextUp.com sells a wide variety of voices to add personality and support for many languages. In particular, you should visit the pages below to sample these recommended voices:

- AT&T Natural Voices - http://www.nextup.com/attnv.html
- NeoSpeech Voices - http://www.nextup.com/neospeech.html
- Cepstral Voices - http://nextup.com/Cepstral.html

Creating Audio Files

TextAloud can create audio files from your text. These files can be .wav, .mp3, or .WMA files. To do this, set your output file options via **Options->Voice and File Options->File Options**. Then use the **<Speak To File>** button in TextAloud, or **Speak->Speak All Articles to File** on the main menu. Completed audio files will be placed in the File Output Directory you specified, and will be ready for playback on your PC or to move to your portable audio device or burn to an audio CD.

What's New in TextAloud 2.0

If you are upgrading from a previous version of TextAloud, here are some of the exciting new features in TextAloud 2.0:

- New easier to use interface.
- Support for Skins to change TextAloud's window appearance.
- Import of Word, HTML, and PDF files.
- Customization of article fonts and highlighting colors for improved readability.
- Change of voice speed, pitch, and volume on main window.
- Improved support for screen readers used by sight-impaired individuals.
- Batch File Converter on the File Menu.
- Support for changing voices within an article.
- New Proofread HotKey for easy proofreading while writing documents or emails.
- Bookmarks allow easy return to important sections of text
- Internet Explorer Plug-In.
- Search/Replace added to Edit menu.
- Ability to specify longer than normal pauses between sentences and paragraphs.
- Creation of ID3 tags on MP3 files.

3.0 About Text To Speech Voices

TextAloud supports a variety of voices used to turn text into sound. Voice technology continues to advance, but they all on some level work based on the same principles. A little background on how they work may be helpful in understanding how to choose voices and how to get the clearest possible speech.

All of the voices used by TextAloud are based on concatenative synthesis. Concatenative voices are developed by taking actual human voice samples, and slicing them up into tiny fragments of sound. Then, based on the text being synthesized, the computer tries to figure out which bits of sound to splice together to make natural sounding words. .

These early voices would take incoming text, break each word down to its phonemes, select the sound for these phonemes, concatenate them together, to make words, then play that audio. This is the basis for all of the current good voice engines.

However, all voices aren't created equally. Languages and the way we use them are more complicated than that. These complications include:

- Rise and fall of pitch depending on context (for example, pitch sometimes rises at the end of questions)
- Words may be written in identical ways but be pronounced differently based on context (He read the book. I will read the book.)
- Some words may not be in a voice engine's dictionary (a voice developed in 1990 may not know the word eBay or google).
- Some text is made up of things other than actual words (such as URLs, Acronyms, Roman Numerals, symbols)

There are other examples and issues beyond this description. The main point to understand is that each voice engine will likely handle things differently in decoding text and creating the sound. Many of the newer engines do a much better job handling complicated context and more closely generating natural sounding spoken words.

An additional factor in how natural sounding the voice will be is the quality and quantity of sound samples used. Very small voice engines, such as those older Microsoft and L&H voices take up only a couple of megabytes of disk space. This makes them great for downloading easily and not requiring a lot of resources. The trade-off is in the depth and richness of the sound they generate. On the other end of the spectrum, voices such as AT&T Natural Voices include nearly 500 megabytes of sound samples. This allows the program to do a much better job approximating human speech with a large number of high-quality samples to build from. The trade-off is these require a great deal of disk space and more CPU power to create real-time speech.

SAPI – Speech Application Interface

As with many aspects of computing using Windows computers, Microsoft has created standard interfaces for speech. SAPI, or Microsoft's Speech API, is Microsoft's attempt to create a standard way for multiple companies to develop voices and make them available through a common programming method. Normally users never need to know about these interfaces. However, there are two versions of SAPI, with varying abilities, and with different support from different engines. These two versions are **SAPI4** and **SAPI5.** TextAloud supports both, however, some engines and some features are only supported in one or the other.

SAPI4 is the earlier version of the standard. It is supported by all of the voices created before 1999, and some created later. SAPI4 will work on most Windows computers. It provides little ability to customize speech beyond TextAloud's basic pronunciation editor. Voices most often used with TextAloud that will support SAPI4 are the Microsoft voices Mary, Mike, and Sam, along with the older L&H Voices. Some users may also have IBM ViaVoice voices from other products that will be available under SAPI4. AT&T Natural Voices also support SAPI4

SAPI5 is the newer standard. It is supported by newer voices such as AT&T Natural Voices, NeoSpeech Voices, Cepstral, and other new voices we will be releasing. SAPI5 adds additional features not available in SAPI4. These include the ability to change voices within a single article of text (for example, to create a script read by multiple characters), the ability to insert pitch and speech changes into the text, and additional specialized TAGs for manipulating speech further. A few features within TextAloud are only available when you tell the program to use ONLY SAPI5 Voices. This change is made via **Options->Voice and File Options**. These functions include the Advanced Pronunciation Editor and Inserting Voice Changes.

NOTE: One important thing to note related to advanced SAPI5 features is that not all voices support all SAPI5 options. For example, Neospeech voices do not support the advanced pronunciation editor. AT&T Voices do not support pitch adjustment or emphasis adjustment.

For more information on advanced speech manipulation using SAPI5 XML Tags, you can download the SAPI documentation at

http://www.microsoft.com/speech/techinfo/apioverview/#_doc

Another important note is that installing TextAloud will not automatically install both the sapi4 and sapi5 interfaces. Windows 98 ships with SAPI4. Windows 2000 and XP ship with SAPI5 already installed. If neither is available, TextAloud will warn you and give you directions for installing one or the other. You can download and install SAPI4 and SAPI5 via

http://www.nextup.com/sapi.html

Voice Sample Rates

Audio Files are digital representations of analog signals. When these sounds are digitized, they are sampled and converted to numbers. The rate at which they are sampled is the sample rate. That sounds a little complicated, and it is. The only part you really need to remember is that each voice engine has a natural sample rate. This rate is represented as a number, 8kHz, 11kHz, 16kHz, or 22kHz. For most uses this sample rate doesn't matter as long as you are happy with the sound you are getting from the voice. There are a couple of uses where this sample rate does matter though.

Telephony usage, where voices are played over the phone, such as with voice menu systems or computer based answer machines, typically require 8kHz voices. You'll notice when you purchase AT&T voices or Neospeech voices from NextUp.com, you'll see an option to purchase either 8kHz or 16kHz voices. While 16kHz voices sound best on the computer, either 8kHz or 16kHz will work fine when played within TextAloud. However, voices purchased for telephony usage should be 8kHz.

The other area where sample rates become important is when creating audio files for certain portable uses. See Creating Audio Files later in this document for further discussion of this.

One thing to note when selecting voices is that sample rate alone doesn't define the quality of the voice. For example, Microsoft voices are 22kHz, but don't sound nearly as good as 16kHz AT&T voices. But, within a given engine, higher Bitrates sound better. 22kHz Microsoft voices sound better than the 8kHz Microsoft voices. 16kHz AT&T voices sound better than the 8kHz AT&T Voices.

Languages

Text To Speech Engines and Voices are available in a variety of languages. In the following sections when we detail commonly available voices, available languages will be listed.

Each voice has a native language. TTS Voices and TextAloud will not do translation. So for example, if you have English text and use a Spanish voice, you will not hear the Spanish version of that text. Likewise, voices do not do a good job of reading a language other than the one it was designed for. Using English text with a French voice will not give you English with a French accent, it will give you mostly gibberish.

Available Voices

Here are voices that are commonly available for use within TextAloud:

- **Microsoft Voices –** Originally licensed by Microsoft from Lernout & Hauspie (L&H), Mary, Mike, and Sam are available free for download at the bottom of http://www.nextup.com/TextAloud/SpeechEngine/voices.html

  While these voices are older and do not have a natural sound, they do a decent job with most text and are easily understood. They are available in English only and take up less than 2mb per voice and are available in SAPI4 or SAPI5 versions.

- **L&H Voices** – These voices are of similar quality to the Microsoft voices, and are available for download at the bottom of http://www.nextup.com/TextAloud/SpeechEngine/voices.html
  They take up less than 2mb per voice, support only SAPI4, and are available in the following languages:

  - American English
  - British English
  - Dutch
  - French
  - German
  - Italian
  - Portuguese
  - Spanish

- **AT&T Natural Voices** – These are among the most natural sounding voices around. You can hear samples of AT&T voices at
  http://www.nextup.com/attnv.html
  and play with an interactive demo at
  http://www.nextup.com/nvdemo.html
  These voices are available for purchase at NextUp.com. They take up nearly 600mb per voice, support both SAPI4 and SAPI5, and are available in the following languages:
  - American English
  - British English
  - American English (Indian Accent)
  - German
  - Latin American Spanish
  - French

  NOTE: AT&T Natural Voices use a significant amount of system memory.
  We recommend 256mb or more of memory for these voices.

- **NeoSpeech Voices** – These are also among the most natural sounding you will find. You can hear samples of Neospeech voices at
  http://www.nextup.com/neospeech.html
  These voices are available for purchase at NextUp.com. They take up nearly 300mb per voice, support SAPI4 Only, and are available in American English.

- **Cepstral Voices** – These are high-quality voices with smaller machine requirements. You can hear samples of Cepstral voices at
  http://www.nextup.com/Cepstral.html
  These voices are available for purchase at NextUp.com. They take up around 25mb per voice, support SAPI5 Only, are currently available in American English and Scottish Accent English, a child's English Voice, with more languages are coming soon..

- **Other Voices** – NextUp.com is adding new voices often, so be sure to check with us about newly available voices. In addition to the voices listed above, TextAloud will attempt to load any other SAPI4 or SAPI5 voices that may be available on your computer. If you have other speech products, you may have received other voices, such as those from IBM or ScanSoft. If available, these voices will be shown on the Engines/Voices TAB in TextAloud, available under **Options->Voice and File Options**. While we have tested with as many voices as possible, if you find you have additional voices and they do not seem to work properly in TextAloud, email us at support@nextup.com for assistance.

NOTE: Anytime you install a new voice, it will not immediately be available within TextAloud. You must first fully exit TextAloud via File->Exit, then restart the program before new voices will be displayed.

A voice is assigned to each article added to TextAloud. This voice can be changed via the Voice Dropdown list on the main window. Which voice is assigned is controlled by the settings for Voice Selection under **Options->TextAloud Options->Article Options**. Voice Assignment can be set to:

- **Default** – The default voice as selected under **Options->Voice and File Options** is used.
- **Random** – A random voice is selected from the enable voices. Voices can be enabled and disabled under **Options->Voice and File Options.**
- **Round Robin** – Voices are rotated sequentially based on enabled voices.

Improving Speech

Judging the quality of TTS Voices is very subjective. What sounds good to one user may not be intelligible to another. TextAloud has many features to allow you to improve the sound. The most important thing you can do is upgrade to one or more of the higher-quality voices listed above.

Additionally, TextAloud easily allows you to adjust the speed, pitch and volume on voices with the sliders on the main window. (NOTE: AT&T Natural Voices do not support pitch adjustments). Most users, as they become accustomed to listening to TextAloud will gradually increase the speed of speech to enable faster reading.

Also see later sections on the Basic and Advanced pronunciation editors to assist with any words that the voices mispronounce.

4.0 Single vs. Multi Article Mode

Before jumping into details of using TextAloud, the concepts of Articles and Single vs. Multi Article mode need to be understood.

An Article is a piece of text you have placed into TextAloud to be read. It may be a single news story, a single document, a single paragraph, whatever you want it to be. The point is, it is dealt with as a single entity within TextAloud. This means it is a chunk of text that is dealt with as one and is given a single title. Understanding this concept helps understand the remainder of this document. If you open a text file into TextAloud, that becomes a single article. If you copy an entire news story to TextAloud using the clipboard, that becomes a single article.

Single Article Mode

There are two distinct modes of operation in TextAloud, Single Article Mode, and Multi Article Mode. You can change Mode by choosing **Options->Single Article** or **Options->Multi Article**. Most users will keep TextAloud in Multi Article mode as detailed in the next section. However, there are situations where a user may want to use Single Article Mode.

In Single Article Mode, you can only deal with one article at a time. Anytime a new article is loaded, the previous article is deleted. If you typically deal with only one thing you may want to hear, then once it is done, you are going off to look for something else, then single article mode may be simpler.

One powerful use of Single Article Mode is by turning on Automatic Speaking. Under **Options->TextAloud Options->Article Options**, if you check the **Automatically Speak New Text**, when in Single article mode, TextAloud will automatically speak any newly opened articles or new articles added via Clipboard Watching.

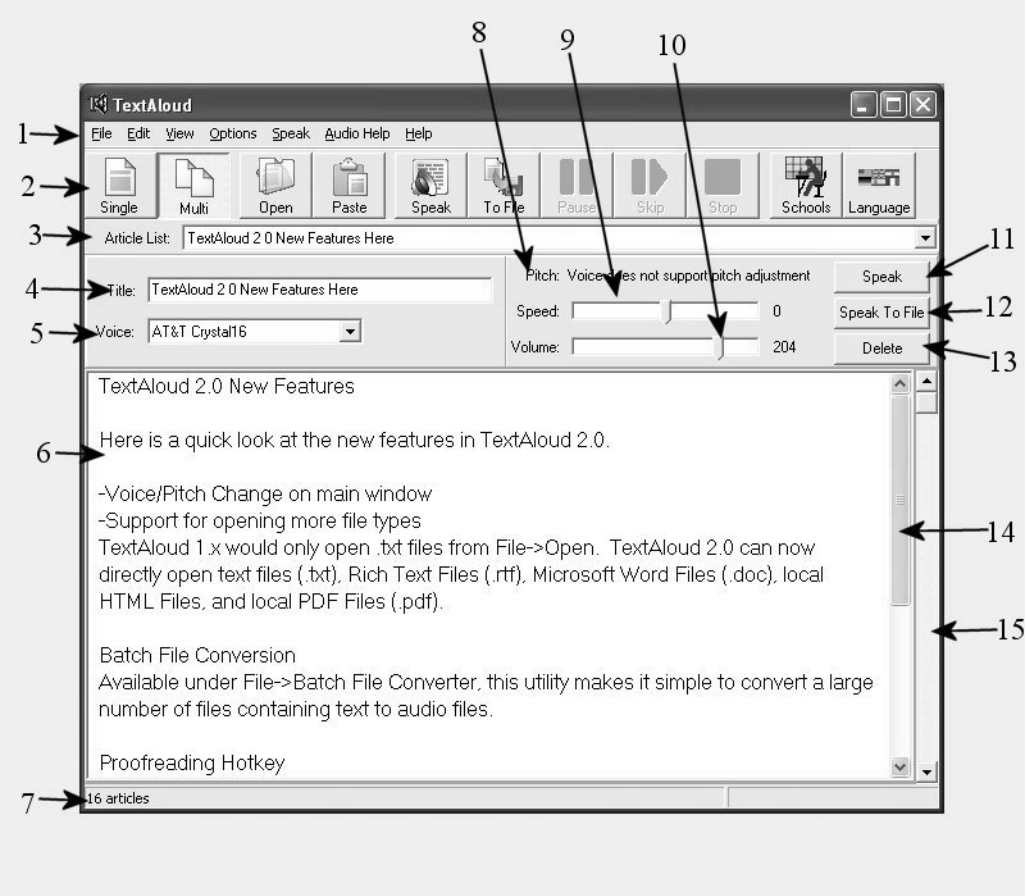
Multi Article Mode

Place TextAloud in Multi Article Mode via **Options->Multi Article**. In Multi Article Mode, TextAloud can support an unlimited number of articles. Each article is automatically assigned a title based on the first few words in the article. You can change this article title by overwriting it in the Title Field. When a new article is added, the new article is displayed, but all previous articles are still available within TextAloud. You can change to a previously added article using the Article List dropdown at the top of the window.

As mentioned, most users prefer Multi Article Mode because it builds a queue of articles. Then when ready, you can listen to individual articles, your complete list of articles, or easily create audio files from the entire list of articles. Based on the **Automatically Delete Text After Play** setting under **Options->TextAloud Options->Article Options**, articles can be automatically removed after spoken.

5.0 TextAloud Main Window Overview

The TextAloud main window is depicted below:



Numbers on the picture annotate key areas detailed as follows:

1. **TextAloud Main Menu** – Provides menu items to all functions in TextAloud. Note that most menu items have shortcut keys, and using **Options->Shortcut Setup** allows you to customize those keyboard shortcuts.

2. **TextAloud Toolbar** – These icons provide quick access to commonly used menu items. Pause your mouse over an icon and a popup hint will provide a description of the icon's function. You can adjust the size of the toolbar, remove it completely, or remove captions via the **View->Toolbar** menu item. The last two buttons on this icon provide information about TextAloud for schools and Language support. These are primarily marketing vehicles, and you may right-click these buttons and choose Hide on the popup menu to remove these two icons.

3. **Article List Dropdown** – This is visible only in Multi Article Mode. Click this dropdown list to see the full list of all articles currently in TextAloud, then select an article title to load it into the main window.

4. **Article Title** – This field is the Title of the current article. Article titles are generated based on the first few words of an article when the article is first loaded. You can change the title by typing in this field. NOTE: The article title becomes the filename when creating audio files.

5. **Voice Dropdown** – The voice dropdown shows the voice selected for the current article. You can click this field to select a different voice from enabled voices. When you change the voice, the speed and pitch settings on the right of the screen will be adjusted to the saved values for that voice.

6. **TextAloud Text Area** – This area is where text of the current article is displayed. When manually creating an article, type or paste in this area. While the article is being spoken, the word currently being spoken will be highlighted in this area (assuming word highlighting is turned on under **Options->TextAloud Options->Miscellaneous)**. You may edit text in this area, and several actions are available on a popup menu when you right-click in this area.

7. **Status Bar** – The status bar at the bottom of the window will often provide helpful status information such as the number of current articles or progress indicators during speaking.

8. **Pitch Slider** – This area contains a slider to allow easy adjustment of the pitch for the current voice. Note that some voices do not support pitch adjustments, as shown in the figure above. Changing a value here will adjust the default pitch for the current voice, so the new value will be used anytime that voice is selected.

9. **Speed Slider** – Use this slider to speed up or slow down speaking when using the current voice. All voices support speed adjustments. You will notice the ranges shown will vary based on voice and SAPI version they support. Changing a value here will adjust the default speed for the current voice.

10. **Volume Slider** – The volume slider controls the WAVE volume for the Windows mixer. This is the same volume that is shown if you bring up the Windows mixer by double-clicking the speaker icon in the system tray area near the clock on the Windows start bar. Changes here are not voice specific but change Windows volume settings for most audio programs.

11. **<Speak> Button** – Click this button to have the current article spoken aloud. This has the same action as clicking **Speak->Speak Current Article.**

12. **<Speak To File> Button** – Click this button to create an audio file from the currently selected article.

13. **<Delete> Button** – Deletes the current article. Same action as **Edit->Delete Selected Article.**

14. **Text Scrollbar** – If the current article has more text than can be shown within the TextAloud window, this scrollbar will appear and can be used to navigate up and down the text of the article.

15. **Multi Article Scrollbar** – When TextAloud has more than one article, use this scrollbar to navigate to different articles. This is useful to move to the next or previous article, or a quick method to the first or last. To move to a particular article, using the Article List Dropdown is easier since you can identify the articles by title.

6.0 Floating Toolbar

TextAloud includes a smaller, floating toolbar which can be used to manage speaking when the main TextAloud window is not shown.

You can adjust the size of the icons as well as remove captions via **Options->TextAloud Options->Miscellaneous.** There are also settings there to dictate when the floating toolbar will be displayed, and whether the toolbar should always stay on top of other windows to keep it available for use. Choices for when the toolbar is displayed are:

- **On Request** – Toolbar is displayed only when TextAloud is minimized and you right-click the TextAloud system tray icon, and then choose Show Toolbar from the menu.
- **When Minimized** – Toolbar is displayed anytime TextAloud is minimized.
- **When Minimized and Reading Starts** – Only shown if speaking while TextAloud is minimized.

While use of the floating toolbar isn't vital for TextAloud use, some users find it very helpful to manage playback of articles while leaving most of your desktop free for other work.

7.0 Running in System Tray

The Windows system tray is the area on the Windows start bar near the system clock. Programs that are running frequently place an icon here to provide you quick access to the program and its functions. Anytime TextAloud is running, it places a small TextAloud icon in the system tray, recognizable as a red T and a speaker icon.

You can double-click this icon at any time to bring the TextAloud main window open and to the top of other windows. By right-clicking this icon, a TextAloud menu will open, providing access to several functions including:

- Start, Pause, Stop Speaking
- TextAloud Options – Under this entry is a convenient choice to turn on and off clipboard watching.
- Exiting TextAloud
- Showing the Floating Toolbar

Via **Options->TextAloud Options->Miscellaneous** there are two settings related to running TextAloud in the system tray.

- The checkbox **Start TextAloud on Windows Login** can be set to cause TextAloud to automatically start and run in the system tray when you login to Windows. This will make sure it is always available, which is important if you often use with Clipboard Watching or HotKeys from within other programs without interacting with the TextAloud main window first.
- The checkbox **TextAloud resides in System Tray when window closed**. When this is checked, if you close TextAloud by clicking the 'X' in the upper-right corner of TextAloud, the program will not exit, but will simply close the main window and remain in the system tray. If this choice is not checked, clicking the 'X' will cause TextAloud to completely exit.

8.0 Bringing Text into TextAloud

TextAloud offers a variety of methods for creating articles from various text sources:

Opening Documents Directly

Using **File->Open** on TextAloud's main menu, you can directly open various file types. The selected file will be imported into TextAloud as a new article. You may also select multiple files if in Multi Article Mode to import multiple articles at one time. The following file types can be directly opened:

- **Text Files (*.txt)** – Article(s) are created from one or more selected .txt files. Article Title will be the filename.
- **Rich Text Files (**.rtf) – These are more advanced text files that include some additional text formatting.
- **HTML Files (**.html) – HTML files are the files that make up web pages. If you save an HTML file locally, for example using File->Save As within Internet Explorer, TextAloud can import that file as an article.
- **Microsoft Word Files (**.doc) – These are documents from the most popular word processor.
- **Adobe Acrobat Files (**.pdf) – Popular publishing file format. One item to note with Adobe Acrobat files is that some PDF files have been copy protected by the author, preventing other programs including TextAloud from extracting text. For documents like these, a specialized converter may be required, such as SolidPDF listed at http://www.nextup.com/partners.html

By default, TextAloud has a document size limit on how much text will be displayed within the TextAloud window. If you open a very large document, you may see text within the TextAloud window noting that the document was too large to import directly into TextAloud, and that it will be referenced in the external file. While this message appears to be an error message, this is simply a possibly over-cautious protection included in TextAloud to prevent huge documents from taking too much of Windows resources. The document will still be spoken as other articles, but text will not be highlighted within the TextAloud window.

This protection mechanism is primarily included within TextAloud to protect older Windows systems. NextUP.com support can provide you with instructions to turn off this limit, so contact support@nextup.com if interested.

Clipboard Watching

About the Windows Clipboard

Microsoft Windows has a feature called the Windows clipboard. This is a global shared memory area where text or other objects can be copied to, then used in other programs. You've likely used this even if you didn't realize it. Copying text to the Windows clipboard can be done from within most programs that allow viewing of text.

Copying text to the Windows clipboard involves first highlighting the text of interest, then performing the actual copy to the Windows clipboard. Highlighting text is accomplished by any of the following:

- Holding left mouse button down while moving mouse over the text of interest, then releasing mouse button once selection has been highlighted
- Within programs that allow text editing, by holding down the Shift button while using arrow keys to move the character cursor.
- By choosing Edit->Select All on the main menu of programs that offer this option.

Once selected text is highlighted, it can be copied to the Windows clipboard by one of the following methods:

- Right-Clicking and choosing Copy from the popup menu within programs that offer this option.
- Choosing Edit->Copy from the main menu of programs that offer this option.
- Holding down the Control Key on your keyboard then pressing C (Control-C).

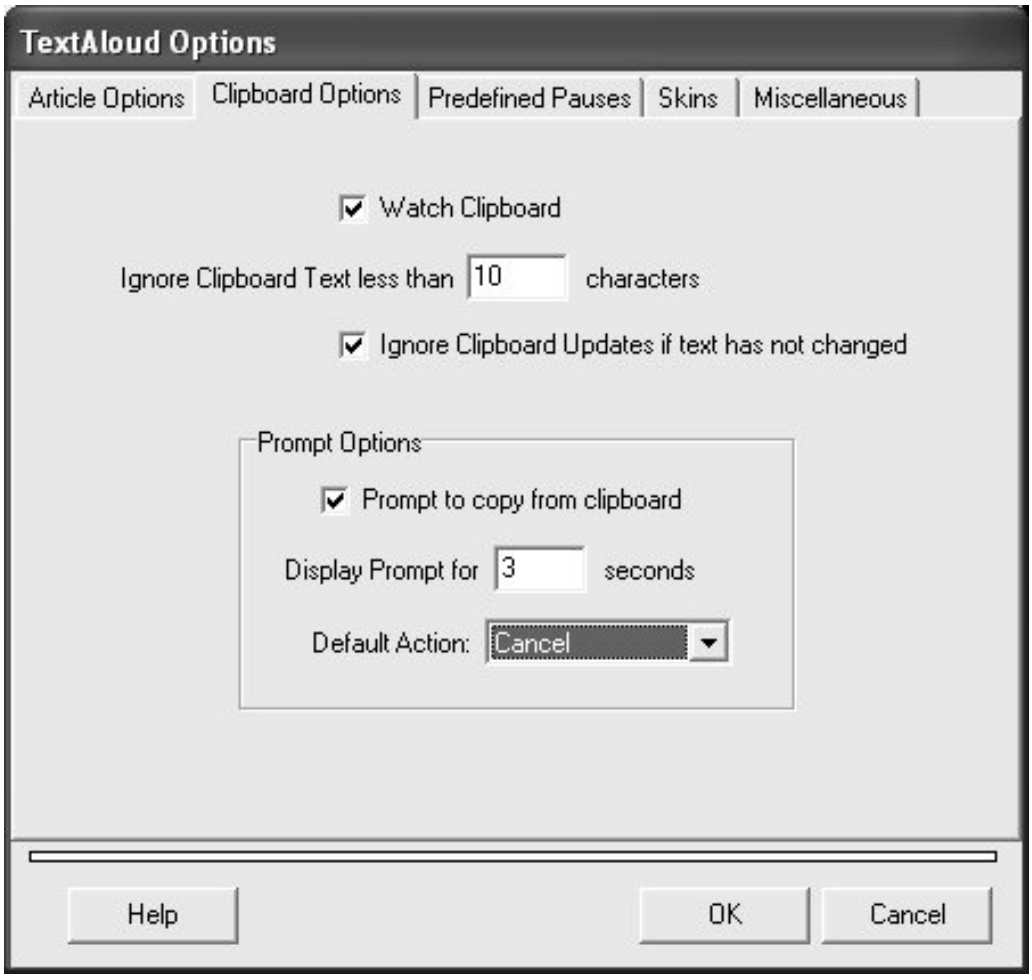
Once this copy command has been executed, the selected text is in the global Windows clipboard, meaning it can be used in other programs by "Pasting" the text into that program (Edit->Paste or Control-V).

TextAloud's Automatic Clipboard Watching

To assist you in importing text of interest into TextAloud, TextAloud includes a feature called Clipboard Watching. When Clipboard Watching is turned on, TextAloud monitors the Windows clipboard for changes, and can automatically speak or import the copied text into TextAloud, or can pop up a window to give you options on what to do with the text.

TextAloud's Clipboard Watching is a very flexible system to give you control over how the program behaves when text is copied to the clipboard. Settings that control this behavior are available via

Options->TextAloud Options->Clipboard. This settings window is shown below:



Use this window to control the behavior of clipboard watching:

- **Watch Clipboard** – When checked, TextAloud will monitor the Windows clipboard.

- **Ignore Clipboard Text less than XX characters** – If you use the Windows clipboard often for other tasks, you may want TextAloud to ignore smaller amounts of text. For example, if you typically only use TextAloud for longer news stories, you might set this value to 200, and any clipboard copies of less than 200 characters will be ignored by TextAloud. TextAloud will only act on copies of more than 200 characters.

- **Ignore Clipboard Updates if text has not changed** – Normally this checkbox should be checked. Some Microsoft programs, including Internet Explorer, have bugs that cause them to send duplicate clipboard messages often. For example, each time you close an internet explorer window, the Windows clipboard will act as if a program has copied text to the clipboard, even though the contents of the clipboard will not change. Checking this will cause TextAloud to completely ignore duplicate copies. However, a side-effect of this is if you manually copy identical text to the clipboard twice in a row, TextAloud will ignore the second copy.

- **Prompt Options Section** – TextAloud can be set to either automatically import copied text as a new article, or to open the **Clipboard Prompt Window** to give you a choice of actions to perform on the text. The **Clipboard Prompt Window** is described in detail below.

- **Prompt to Copy from Clipboard** – When this is checked, the Clipboard Prompt Window will be displayed anytime new text is copied to the Windows clipboard. When unchecked, the prompt will not be displayed and the **Default Action** will be performed automatically.

- **Display Prompt for XX Seconds** – The **Clipboard Prompt Window** is displayed as a popup window, showing on top of other windows after text is copied to the clipboard. Using this setting you can specify how long the window should be displayed. For example, if you specify 3 seconds, the window will be displayed for 3 seconds. This gives you 3 seconds to click a button to specify what you want to do with the text. If you do not click within 3 seconds, the window will close and the **Default Action** will be executed. If you need longer to decide what to do, increase this time so the window will be displayed longer.

- **Default Action** – Your selection here determines what will be done with clipboard text if you do not have prompting turned on, or if you do not select an action before the **Clipboard Prompt Window** disappears. Options for this default action are:

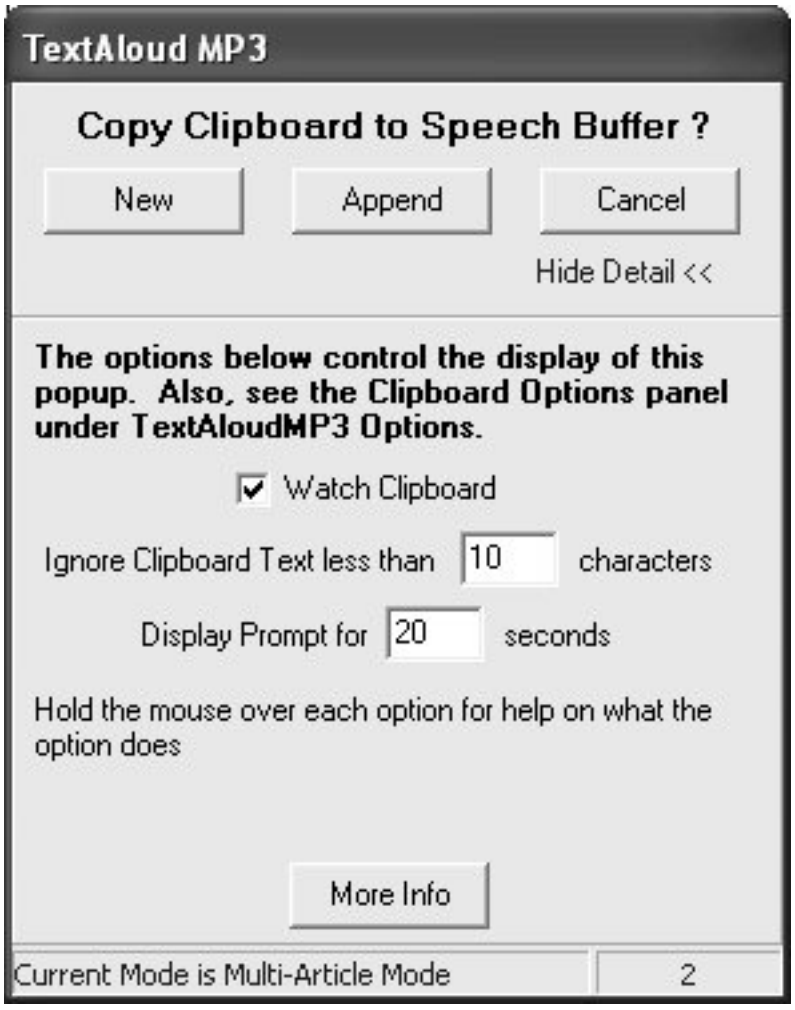
    - **New** – Automatically import the clipboard text into TextAloud as a new article. If in Single Article Mode and Automatic Speaking is turned on, automatically speak the text.

    - **Append** – Automatically append the clipboard text to the bottom of the current article.

    - **Cancel** – Do nothing with the clipboard text.

    - **Remember Last** – Automatically perform whatever action was chosen the last time you actually clicked a button on the **Clipboard Prompt Window**.

As mentioned above, if Clipboard Prompting is turned on, TextAloud will display the following clipboard window:


TextAloud MP3
Copy Clipboard to Speech Buffer ?
New
Append
Cancel
Hide Detail <<
The options below control the display of this popup. Also, see the Clipboard Options panel under TextAloudMP3 Options.
Watch Clipboard
Ignore Clipboard Text less than 10 characters
Display Prompt for 20 seconds
Hold the mouse over each option for help on what the option does
More Info
Current Mode is Multi-Article Mode
2

Items on this window are:

- **<New>** - Click the New button to import the clipboard text into TextAloud as a new article.
- **<Append>** - Click the Append button to append the clipboard text to the bottom of the current article. This is useful for example if you are copying a news story from Internet Explorer, but you bring it in as two separate copies in order to skip over some advertisement text.

- **<Cancel>** - Click Cancel to do nothing with the text.

- **Hide Details** – Clicking the Hide Details link will close the lower section of the window, providing a smaller popup window in the future which displays only the action buttons.

- **Watch Clipboard, Ignore Clipboard Text…, and Display Prompt…** - These are identical to those items in the Clipboard Settings window from above.

- **Status Bar** – The status bar at the bottom of the window has two sections. The left side reminds you whether TextAloud is in Single or Multi Article mode. The right side of the panel, where **2** is displayed in this example, is a counter that counts down the number of seconds before the window will close automatically and the default action will be taken.

Common Clipboard Watching Setups

For most users, one of two clipboard setups will be most commonly used.

For users who use Single Article Mode and want the clipboard typically spoken, use:

- Clipboard Watching On
- Ignore less than 100 characters
- Prompting Off
- Default Action of New
- Automatically Speak under Article Options checked.

This will cause TextAloud to automatically speak any text over 100 characters that is copied to the clipboard.

For users who typically use TextAloud to clip articles that they will listen to after compiling several articles, use:

- Clipboard Watching On
- Ignore less than 200 characters
- Prompting On
- Default Action of Cancel

With these settings, when you copy more than 200 characters, TextAloud will give you the option to import as new or append, or to cancel and do nothing with the text. Note that when doing other work that may use the clipboard often, you can easily turn of clipboard watching by right-clicking the TextAloud system tray icon, choosing Options, and unchecking Watch Clipboard.

It is also important to note that clipboard watching is often too intrusive for some users who often use the Windows clipboard when performing tasks unrelated to TextAloud. For these users we recommend that clipboard watching be turned off, and instead HotKeys be used for dealing with text from other programs in TextAloud. HotKeys will be detailed in a later section.

Manual Typing or Pasting

In addition to the more automatic methods of creating new articles in TextAloud, you may also manually create articles. To do this, click **File->New Article** on the main menu. This will create a blank article. A default title will be generated but can be overwritten in the Title edit box.

Next, within the Text Area, you can manually type in contents of the article. In addition you can use Cut, Copy, and Paste within this area similar to the way you can within any text editing program.

You can even save the text you create as an external text file by choosing **File->Save Article As->Text File**.

Import New HotKey

HotKey's are keyboard combinations that you can setup via **Options->HotKey Setup**. A HotKey is somewhat like a global shortcut key. As long as TextAloud is running, even if the TextAloud window isn't displayed but is minimized, TextAloud will watch for this keyboard sequence, and can then take an action. More details on all of TextAloud's HotKey functionality is detailed in the HotKey Reference section, but the Import New HotKey in particular provides a convenient way to import text into TextAloud.

Via **Options->HotKey Setup**, define a key combination for the Import New HotKey. Choosing something obscure, such as Control-Alt-Shift-N insures you select a sequence that isn't already in use by another program. Once this is defined, you can work within any program, highlight some text, then press Control-Alt-Shift-N, and the highlighted text will automatically be imported into TextAloud as a new article.

Using this Import New HotKey gives you an easy way to create new articles while working in Documents, Email, or other text programs without having to use Clipboard Watching, which can sometimes become annoying.

Internet Explorer Plug-In

More details on the Internet Explorer Plug-In are provided in a later section. After installing TextAloud 2.0, then restarting Windows, the TextAloud toolbar will be available within Internet Explorer via **View->Toolbars->TextAloud**.

The 3rd icon in this toolbar looks like a printed document with a folded corner. This is the **Create TextAloud Article from Browser Text** button. When viewing a web page within Internet Explorer, if you select text within the browser window, then click this button, a new TextAloud article will be created containing the highlighted text. If no text is selected within Internet Explorer, then pressing the Create button will create a new article in TextAloud containing all of the text from the displayed web page.

9.0 Speaking Aloud

Starting Speaking

TextAloud offers several methods to start speaking.

To start listening to the current article, click **Speak->Speak Current Article**, or click the **<Speak>** button on the right side of the window (just above the **<Speak To File>** button). If in Single Article Mode, clicking the **<Speak>** toolbar button will have this same effect.

If in Multi Article Mode, you can start listening to all articles by clicking **Speak->All Articles Aloud** or clicking the **<Speak>** toolbar button. TextAloud will switch to the first article and begin speaking. After an article has completed, it will optionally be deleted automatically (based on settings under **Options->TextAloud Options->Article Options)** and then speaking will continue with the next article in your article list, until all articles have been spoken.

If Word Highlighting is turned on, as you hear a word spoken, it will be highlighted within the text area. Word highlighting can be enabled/disabled via **Options->TextAloud Options->Miscellaneous**. You'll also notice status updates shown on the TextAloud Status Bar showing information about voice initialization, progress through the article lists as well as progress indicating % completion for the current article.

In addition to reading full article text from the beginning, additional options are available:

- **Speak->Speak From Cursor Aloud** or right-click in the text area and choose **Speak from Cursor Aloud** to start speaking at the current cursor location instead of from the start. So if you want to skip some portion of text, click to the spot where you want to start speaking, and then choose Speak From Cursor Aloud

- You may also speak only a portion of an article. Highlight a portion of text within the current article, then choose **Speak->Speak Selected Text Aloud** or right-click and choose **Speak Selected Text Aloud**.

Actions and Navigation during Speaking

While TextAloud is actively speaking aloud, there are several actions available:

- **Stop** – To stop speaking click
    - **Speak->Stop** on the main menu.
    - The **<Stop>** toolbar icon.
    - The **<Stop>** icon on the floating toolbar.
    - Choosing **Stop** on the menu displayed by right-clicking on the TextAloud System Tray Icon.
- **Pause/Resume** – To pause speaking and keep cursor in place to resume at the same spot click
    - **Speak->Pause** on the main menu.
    - The **<Pause>** toolbar icon.
    - The **<Pause>** icon on the floating toolbar.
    - Choosing **Pause** on the menu displayed by right-clicking on the TextAloud System Tray Icon.

    NOTE: Once speaking has been paused, the Pause items above will change to **Resume**. Click any of those to resume speaking.

- **Skip to Next Article** – While in Multi Article Mode and Speaking All Articles, you can skip the current article and start speaking the next article by choosing

  - **Speak->Skip to Next Article** on the main menu.
  - The **<Skip>** toolbar icon.
  - The **<Skip>** icon on the floating toolbar.
  - Choosing **Skip** on the menu displayed by right-clicking on the TextAloud System Tray Icon.

  NOTE: If Automatically Delete is turned on under **Options->TextAloud Options->Article Options**, when you skip an article it will automatically be deleted.

- **Skip to Previous Article** – While in Multi Article Mode and Speaking All Article, if Automatic Delete is not on, you may skip to next article with the commands above, and you may skip back to a previous article using **Speak->Skip To Previous Article**.

  NOTE: Skip to Next and Previous can also be used when TextAloud is not speaking to simply switch between multiple articles when in Multi Article Mode.

- **Skipping Forward and Back Within a single article** – While text is speaking, there are several menu options under **Speak->Skip Forward** and **Speak->Skip Back** allowing you to skip forward and back by line, paragraph, or a set number of lines. These menu items by default do not have shortcut keys defined, but using **Options->Shortcut Setup** you can define shortcut keys to allow you to easily skip back and forth as desired during speaking.

10.0 Customizing Speech

Text To Speech is an imperfect science. Additionally, because each listener has different listening skills and preferences, judging the quality of speech is a very personal and subjective process. TextAloud provides dozens of features and tools to help you customize the speech in order to customize and improve speech.

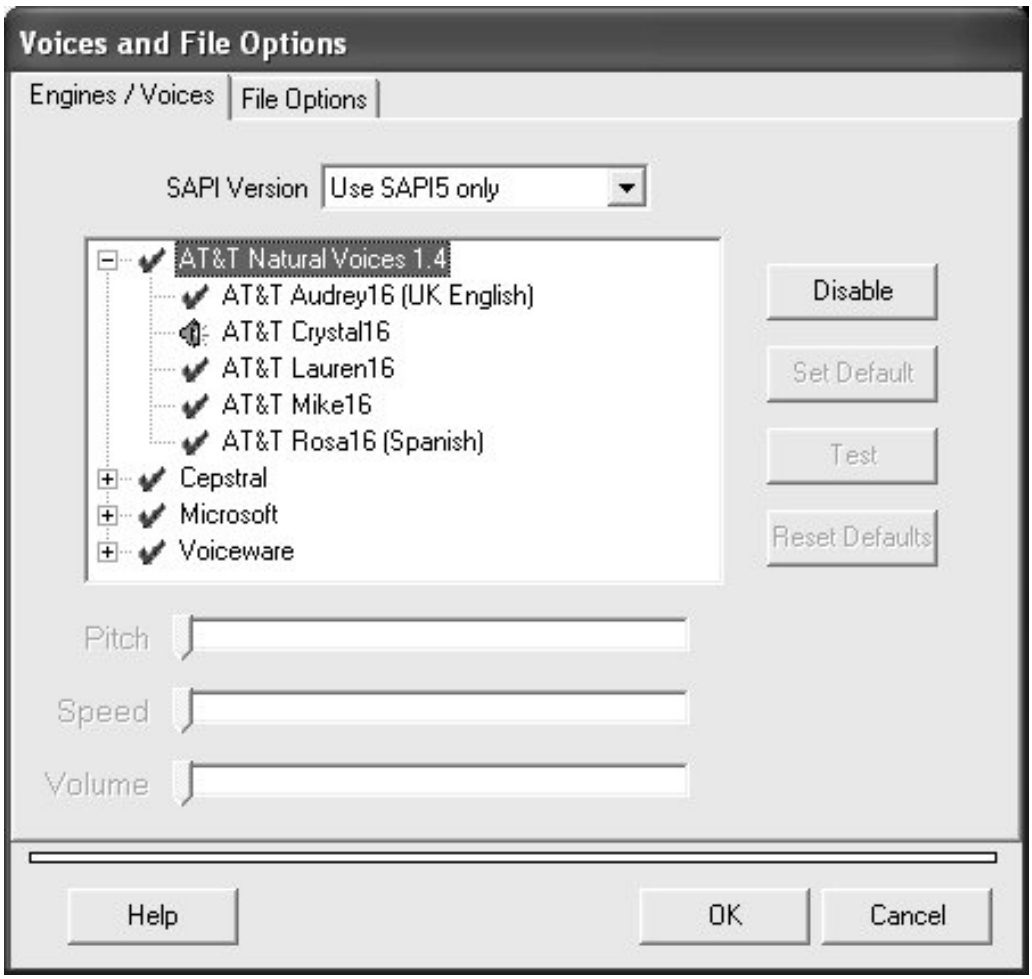
Voice Selection

As discussed in the **About Text To Speech Voices** section, TextAloud supports a wide variety of voices. Review that section and mentioned voices to insure the voices you have on your computers are the voices that sound best to you.

TextAloud provides flexible options for selecting voices. Some users find a single voice they enjoy most and want each article to be spoken by that voice. Some users find that having each article spoken with a different voice makes the process less monotonous, much like when listening to a news cast, anchors take turns reading stories.

Reviewing Available Voices

The first step in setting up your voice preferences is reviewing available voices. By going to **Options->Voice and File Options** you'll see all available voices.



SAPI Version NOTE: As discussed in other sections of this document, some features of TextAloud are available only with SAPI5 Voices, while some voices are only available under SAPI4. The SAPI Version dropdown at the top of this window selects whether you use SAPI4, SAPI5, or Both types of voices. Normally this selection should be set to Both unless you want to use functions specified for SAPI 5 Only.

From this Engines/Voices window, you will see folders listed for each voice company. By expanding the folder, as the AT&T folder is expanded above, you'll see each available voice. By clicking a voice, you will have options to:

- **Disable/Enable** – Enabling a voice makes it available for use within TextAloud.
- **Set Default** – Sets a voice as the default voice. If your voice selection settings under Article Options is set for "Default", this voice will always be used. Additionally, the Default voice is always used for the **Speak HotKey** detailed in the **HotKey Reference** section.
- **Test** – plays a test message using the voice.
- **Reset Defaults** – Resets Pitch, Speed, and Volume sliders to their default values for a given voice.
- **Pitch** – Adjusts the pitch of the voice (note that AT&T Natural Voices do not support pitch adjustments).
- **Speed** – Adjusts the speed at which the voice speaks.
- **Volume** – Adjusts the volume of this voice. Note that this volume is different than the Windows mixer volume slider available on the TextAloud main window. This volume setting also affects volume of the voice when creating audio files.

Note that you may also edit the Pitch, Speed, and Volume for a voice by right-clicking in the text area of TextAloud, and choosing Edit Voice.

The main use of this window is to enable only those voices you wish to use, disabling all other voices.

Automatic Voice Selection Settings

When TextAloud creates a new article, a voice is automatically assigned to that article. This is the voice shown on the Voice Dropdown when the article is selected in the main TextAloud window and is the voice that will be used to speak the article unless it is manually changed via that Voice Dropdown.

Via Article Options at **Options->TextAloud Options->Article Options** you can set how you want voices to be selected and assigned to new articles. The options here are:

- **Default** – The voice you've selected as the Default voice will be automatically assigned to new articles.

- **Random** – A random voice from the pool of enabled voices will be selected and assigned to new articles.

- **Round Robin** – Voices will be selected and assigned to new articles sequentially. For example, if you had Mary, Crystal, and Kate enabled, and you imported 6 new articles, voices might be assigned in this order: Mary, Crystal, Kate, Mary, Crystal, Kate …

As noted, these settings are for the voice assignment when articles are created. You can change the actual voice to be used at any time manually using the Voice Dropdown.

Speed and Pitch adjustments

(NOTE: discussions related to Pitch do not apply to AT&T Natural Voices, which do not support Pitch adjustments).

TextAloud allows you to adjust the speed and pitch of speaking. On the main TextAloud window, sliders are provided to adjust both speed and pitch.

Move the pitch indicator to the right to increase pitch (make the voice sound higher) or to the left to decrease pitch (make the voice sound lower). With some voices enough adjustment may be available to even change the gender sound of the voice, or raise it enough to make a voice sound like a child. The amount of adjustment supported varies by each voice so experiment with these.

Speed can also be increased or decreased. When first starting to use TextAloud, some users find the voices more easily understood by slowing down the rate of speech slightly. Then, as you grow accustomed to the voices, you can increase the speed to absorb information more quickly.

These adjustments may be made while speaking is taking place. You'll likely notice a small pause after adjustments, while TextAloud readies the voices for the new settings.

TextAloud automatically saves speed and pitch settings for each voice in the Windows registry. This means that when using a particular voice if you change these settings, these new settings are saved and will be in effect again the next time the voice is used.

Volume Adjustments

There are two separate volume adjustments available within TextAloud. Each voice has a volume setting. This volume affects the loudness of the voice whether used aloud or to audio file, and can be thought of somewhat as a relative volume setting, where you are specifying a volume relative to other voice volumes. This is the volume setting discussed, in the **Reviewing Available Voices section**.

Additionally, when speaking aloud, the volume level you will hear is affected by:

- Volume of the volume adjustment on your speakers
- Master Volume setting on the Windows mixer
- WAVE Volume setting on the Windows mixer

The Windows Mixer is the volume control for Windows. You can open this dialog typically by double-clicking the speaker icon in the Windows system tray, near the clock on the start bar. If you have problems with volume being too low, or hearing no sound at all, be sure to turn up these volumes and make sure none of the Mute checkboxes are checked.

On the main TextAloud window, there is a volume control. This corresponds to the WAVE Volume setting on the Windows mixer, and gives you some immediate control over the system volume.

Inserting Pauses into Text

Each voice engine has its own characteristics on how long it pauses for certain types of punctuations, between sentences, and between paragraphs. There are times when you would like to have a slightly longer pause at certain spots in playback of audio.

Via **Options->TextAloud Options->Predefined Pauses**, you can specify longer than normal pauses for end of sentences or end of paragraphs. Entering values of 0 seconds uses the default values for the voice being used. By putting a other values here, you can extend the amount of pause. For example, putting 1.5 into the Sentence Pause Interval causes TextAloud to pause an additional 1.5 seconds at the end of each sentence.

You may also manually insert pauses at any spot within text. By right-clicking at a spot in the text, a popup menu will be displayed. From there, choose Insert Pause, and you'll see several pre-defined pause intervals to choose from. Choosing an interval will insert a **Pause TAG**. For example, if you choose 0.5 Seconds, the Pause tag that will be inserted is {{Pause=0.5}}

While speaking text, when TextAloud encounters this pause tag while speaking, there will be ½ second of silence at that spot. You may also manually insert pause TAGs of any value by inserting the text {{Pause=x.y}} where x.y is the amount of time in seconds to pause.

Non-Alpha Filtering

Speech engines are designed to work primarily with standard text. When used with some types of text, such as email and other documents that may have symbols, non-standard punctuation, or other characters not typically meant to be spoken, some speech engines will speak these characters. This can often be very distracting and make the real text of interest difficult to listen to.

Under **Options->TextAloud Options->Miscellaneous** there is a checkbox for **Filter non-alpha symbols**. With this checked, some characters that aren't typically part of speech will be filtered out by TextAloud to prevent them from being spoken. The characters typically filtered out by this setting are:

```
[     ]     (     )     |     {     }     ^     *     _     `     ~     :
along with small and large bullet characters.
```

Pronunciation Editor

Each voice has its own characteristics and quirks. The newer voices pronounce most words correctly, but no voice gets everything perfect. TextAloud includes two types of pronunciation editors available for you to use to correct any words that you find are often mispronounced.

Basic Editor

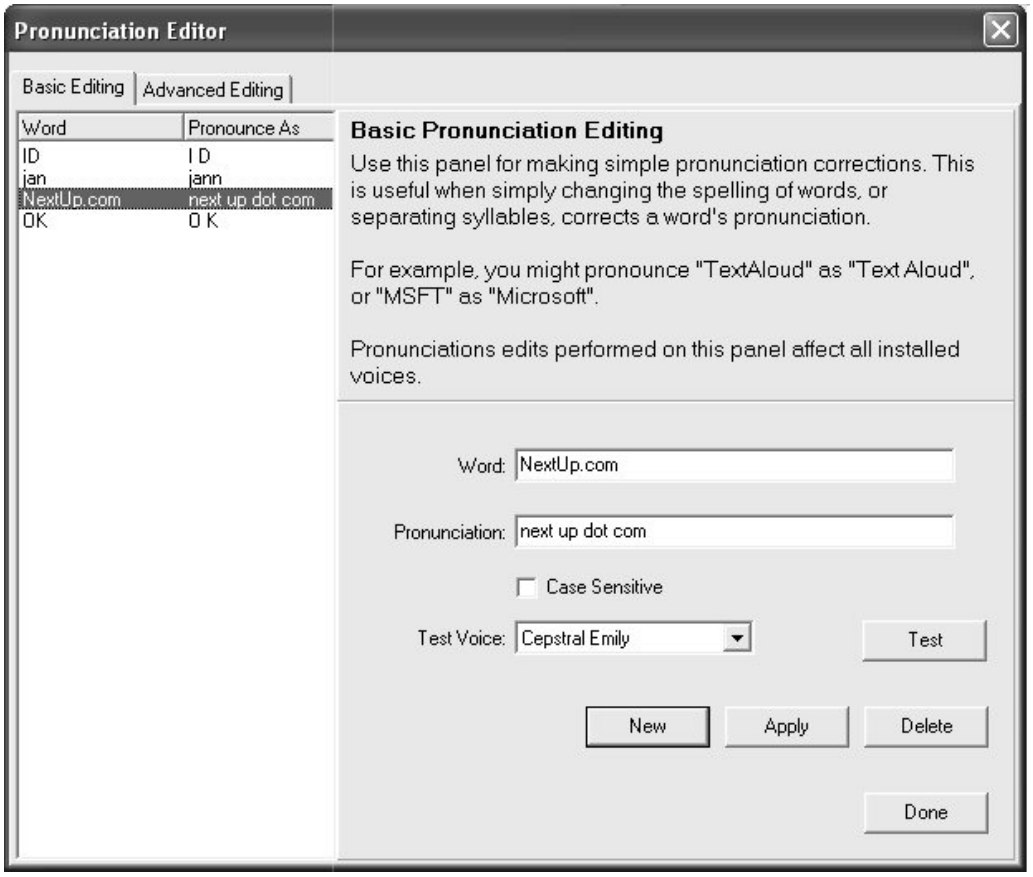
Found via **Options->Pronunciation Editor**, TextAloud's basic pronunciation editor allows you to correct most types of pronunciation mistakes. The basic editor creates entries that apply to all voices, and works on a "sounds like" spelling of words. This means the basic editor does not specify actual phonemes (as discussed in the **How Text To Speech Voices Work** section). This "sounds like" spelling of words is often much simpler to use than other types of pronunciation editing.

The basic edits work by replacing a word in the text with its defined Pronunciation Spelling. For example, some voice engines attempt to convert abbreviations to their full words. In a case like this, the word "Jan" in a sentence might refer to a girl named Jan, but the speech engine may pronounce it "January". To disable this behavior, you create a new entry for the word Jan and have it pronounced as "Jann". This substitution tricks the voice engine into saying the word as you'd like it pronounced rather than trying to expand an abbreviation.

Another example is the term "NextUp.com". Some voices are unable to speak this correctly, seeing NextUp as one work and running it together, seeing the period as the end of a sentence, and unsure what to do with "com". Using the basic editor we can define a better pronunciation by defining "NextUp.com" to be spoken as

"next up dot com".

The Basic Editor is shown below:



- **Defined Words List** – On the left side of the window, the list of words you have defined in the editor is a two column list with column headers of Word and Pronounced As. To Edit an existing word definition, click the entry, make changes in the Pronunciation field, then click Apply.

- **Word** – The word you are correcting.

- **Pronunciation** – The new way you'd like the word to be pronounced. This basically is what is substituted for **Word** when it is sent to the speech engine.

- **Case Sensitive** – Check this box if **Word** is case sensitive. For example if you want a substitution to happen for "OK" but not for "ok", then Word would be "OK" and case sensitive would be checked.

- **Test Voice** – This selects the voice to be used when you click the Test Button. The Text button will speak the new pronunciation of the word. NOTE: Because voice engines sometimes choose pronunciation based on the context within a sentence, there are cases where a word will sound fine within this test, but be pronounced differently when read with full sentences.

- **New** – Click this to start defining a new pronunciation edit. This basically clears the fields above.

- **Apply** – Save the pronunciation edit you have defined above.

- **Delete** – Delete the currently selected pronunciation edit from your list of defined words.

- **Done** – Close this window.

The most common method for identifying mispronunciations you'd like to correct is hearing them while listening to an article. When listening to text and you hear a word you'd like to correct, simply click stop, highlight the mispronounced word, then right-click and choose **Pronunciation Editor** from the popup menu. This will open the basic editor and preload the mispronounced word into the Word field to speed definition of the new edit.

Changing Pronunciation of Substrings

By default, entries in the Basic Pronunciation Editor are applied only when text in the "Word" field actually occurs on a word boundary. Substitutions are not performed on text that appears as a substring of another word.

For example, entering an alternative pronunciation for the word "day" changes the pronunciation of "day" everywhere it appears as a word, but not in words like "today", "yesterday", etc.

To change the substitution of words that appear as substrings, use the **&** character. The placement of the **&** determines whether leading characters, trailing characters, or both should allow substitutions.

In the table below, a "Yes" in the column indicates that a Basic Pronunciation Editor substitution will be performed for the word.

	Word Field of Pronunciation Editor			
Word In Text	**board**	**&board**	**board&**	**&board&**
board	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
snowboard		Yes		Yes
boarding			Yes	Yes
snowboarding				Yes

Pattern Matching with Masks and Regular Expressions

Masks and Regular Expressions allow you to perform more complex filtering and pronunciation changes from the Basic Pronunciation Editor. Instead of specifying pronunciations for individual words or substrings, you can specify patterns to search for and build pronunciations based on sub expressions in the matching strings.

If you're not familiar with the term, Regular Expressions are a pattern matching language used for searching and parsing text. TextAloud help will not get into the detailed syntax of using Regular Expressions, so if you've never seen them before you will need to look at some reference material. There are plenty of references available on the web, you can get started by visiting
http://www.regular-expressions.info/

Although not as powerful as Regular Expressions, Masks provide similar capability and are easier to learn and use.

A Mask or Regular Expression is added to the Basic Pronunciation Editor by placing one of the following into the Word field:

{{re=*.... regular expression ...***}}**

{{mask=*.... mask ...***}}**

A string in the Word field beginning with {{re= or {{mask= indicates the beginning of a regular expression or mask. The trailing }} characters are required to terminate the string.

The following characters may be used to construct a Mask:

Mask Character	Description

#	Matches any digit (0 thru 9).
$	Matches any alpha character (a thru z and A thru Z).
@	Matches any alpha-numeric character (a thru z, A thru Z, and 0 thru 9).
?	Matches any character (wildcard).
_ (underscore)	Matches any word boundary character (spaces and punctuation).

In the Pronunciation field, supply the text that should be substituted for any text that matches the Mask or Regular Expression. Use sets of parentheses in the Mask / Regular Expression to indicate sub expressions that should be included in the Pronunciation field. $1 in the pronunciation field references the first parentheses set, $2 the second set, and so on. This allows you to change the pronunciations of text patterns, where the substituted text contains pieces of the strings that match the patterns.

The following examples will illustrate how to use a Mask or Regular Expressions to change the pronunciation of year numbers. The sample problem is to ensure that year numbers (like 1987) are pronounced as "nineteen eighty seven" and not "one thousand nine hundred and eighty seven".

Example 1 - Year Number Pronunciation Using a Mask

To solve this problem using a mask, enter the following text into the Word and Pronunciation fields:

Word: {{mask=_19(##)(_)}}

Pronunciation: <s>nineteen $1$2

The pattern specified by the mask is a leading word separator, followed by the string "19", two digits and another word separator. Whenever this pattern is detected in the text, the text in the Pronunciation field will replace it. The <s> in the pronunciation indicates to insert a space. This is necessary because the first character matched by the mask is a word separator, so a leading space should be included in the substitution. Following this space, the string "nineteen " is added. The $1 and $2 strings in the Pronunciation reference parentheses sets in the mask: $1 is replaced by the last two digits of the year, and $2 is replaced with any trailing punctuation.

Example 2 - Year Number Pronunciation Using a Regular Expression

To solve the same problem using a Regular Expression, enter the following text into the Word and Pronunciation fields:

Word: {{re=\b19(\d\d)(\b)}}

Pronunciation: <s>nineteen $1$2

The use of a regular expression is very similar to a mask in this case. The "\b" strings in the Regular Expression match on word separators, and the "\d" strings match on the digits 0 thru 9.

Advanced Phoneme Editor

As discussed in the **How Text To Speech Voices Work** section, Phonemes can be used to define how a word is spoken. When used only with some SAPI5 Voices that support it, TextAloud offers an Advanced Phoneme Editor to give you greater control over how some words are spoken.

Phonemes are defined as:

Definition

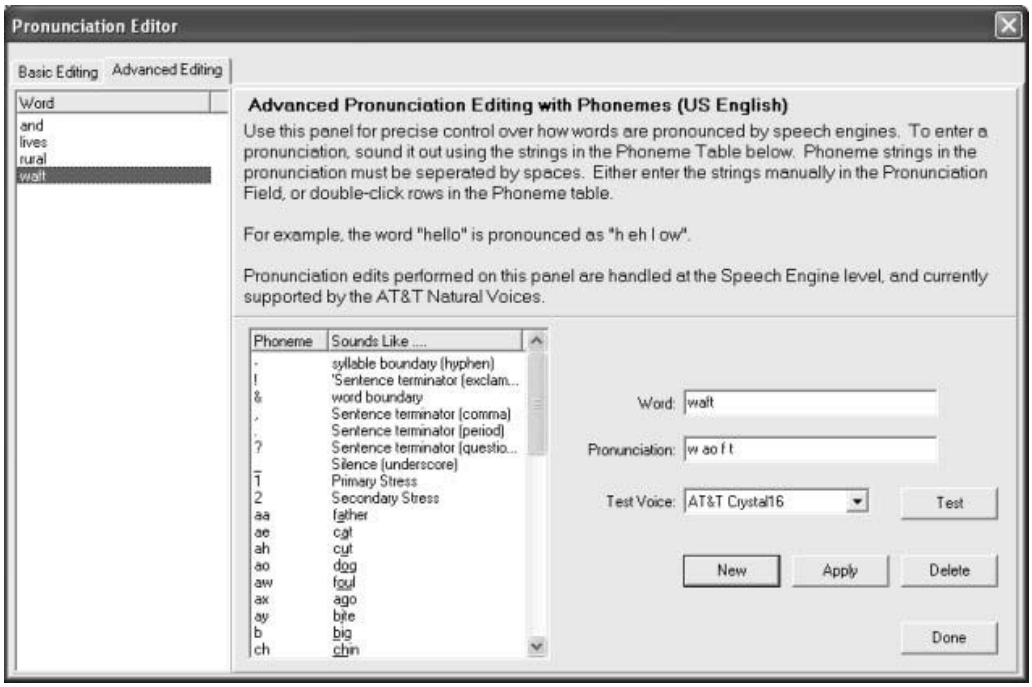
A phoneme is a member of the set of the smallest units of speech that serve to distinguish one utterance from another in a language or dialect.

Examples

A unit of speech is considered a phoneme if replacing it in a word results in a change of meaning. Here are some examples of phonemes:

- *pin* becomes *bin*
- *Bat* becomes *rat*
- *cot* becomes *cut*

To enable the advanced phoneme editor, you must switch TextAloud to use SAPI5 Only. This is done via **Options->Voice and File Options->Engines/Voices** by setting SAPI Version to SAPI5 Only. After doing this, when you choose **Options->Pronunciation Editor**, there will be the Basic Editor as previously discussed, but there will also be an additional TAB available labeled Advanced. Clicking this Advanced TAB will display the Advanced Pronunciation Editor as shown below:


Pronunciation Editor
Basic Editing
Advanced Editing
Word
and
lives
rural
walt
Advanced Pronunciation Editing with Phonemes (US English)
Use this panel for precise control over how words are pronounced by speech engines. To enter a pronunciation, sound it out using the strings in the Phoneme Table below. Phoneme strings in the pronunciation must be seperated by spaces. Either enter the strings manually in the Pronunciation Field, or double-click rows in the Phoneme table.
For example, the word "hello" is pronounced as "h eh l ow".
Pronunciation edits performed on this panel are handled at the Speech Engine level, and currently supported by the AT&T Natural Voices.
Phoneme
Sounds Like ....
- syllable boundary (hyphen)
! 'Sentence terminator (exclam...
& word boundary
, Sentence terminator (comma)
. Sentence terminator (period)
? Sentence terminator (questio...
_ Silence (underscore)
1 Primary Stress
2 Secondary Stress
aa father
ae cat
ah cut
ao dog
aw foul
ax ago
ay bite
b big
ch chin
Word: walt
Pronunciation: w ao l t
Test Voice: AT&T Crystal16
Test
New
Apply
Delete
Done

As with the Basic editor, the list on the left side shows all words you have defined in the advanced editor. Select a word there to load it into the Word and pronunciation fields to edit.

The significant difference between the basic editor and this advanced editor is what is allowed in the pronunciation fields. Only defined Phonemes from the table in the middle of the screen can be used. As you define the pronunciation of a word, you scroll through the list of available phonemes, then double-click the phoneme to have it appended to the pronunciation. When done, click Apply, then done.

Note that some advanced features, such as Primary Stress and Secondary Stress are provided to adjust emphasis on syllables, but not all voices will obey these instructions.

Edits defined in the advanced editor only apply when using SAPI5 voices.

Note on Neospeech Voices: Neospeech voices currently do not support phoneme edits.

Voice Switching

TextAloud 2.0 has the ability to switch voices within the middle of an article. This is another of the features that is only available when TextAloud is set to use SAPI5 Voices Only. After this is done, you can right-click at any spot within the text and choose **Insert Voice Change** (or choose **Edit->Insert Voice Change**) and TextAloud will insert a special voice change TAG. This tag will look similar to

<voice required="name = Crystal16">

When speaking text and it gets to this TAG, TextAloud will switch to the Crystal voice. You can have multiple voice switches within an article. This allows you to simulate multiple people speaking the text, for special cases such as reading a script or simply creating variety within an article.

11.0 Audio File Creation

One of the most powerful and popular features of TextAloud is its ability to create audio files from text. These spoken word audio files give you greater flexibility in listening to text, by allowing you to use the audio elsewhere. Some of the possible uses include:

- Sending audio files via email to friends or co-workers.
- Burning on Audio CD to listen on your car CD player during your commute.
- Listening while exercising using portable MP3 player or iPod
- Listen to converted text on PDA's such as PocketPCs.
- Creating audio files for use in presentations, such as PowerPoint files.
- Creating audio versions of web pages for sight-impaired users.

About Audio File Types

There are dozens of different audio file types in the world of computing. TextAloud has built-in support for the 3 most popular types, WAVE, MP3, and Windows Media Audio.

- Wave, or .wav files, are standard Windows audio files. These are typically uncompressed files, meaning they take up significant disk space. Because they are uncompressed, they typically have the best and cleanest sound. Other file types are compressed somewhat, and depending on exact details of this compression, some sound quality can be lost or some noise added.

  Wave files can also be used to create other file types not supported by TextAloud using external audio file converters. External converters are available to create other audio file types, such as RealMedia files or OGG/Vorbis files.

- MP3 is a popular audio file format. MP3 files, made popular in the downloadable music explosion of the last decade, are compressed files, sometimes as little as 100th the size of uncompressed Wave files. MP3 files are most often used with TextAloud because of this size advantage, and because of the huge number of inexpensive portable audio devices that support playback of MP3 files. For a short list of NextUp.com recommended MP3 players, visit http://www.nextup.com/TextAloud/mp3players.html

- WMA, or Windows Media Audio is a Microsoft audio file format meant to compete with MP3. Windows Media Files can be slightly smaller than MP3 files and may have a slight sound quality advantage over MP3. TextAloud supports direct creation of WMA files, although you may need to download an additional free piece of software from http://www.nextup.com/WMA.html
  Some portable players are now on the market that support WMA files, as well as Windows media player support on PocketPC PDA devices.

The type of file you want TextAloud to create when creating audio files instead of speaking aloud is specified under **Options->Voice and File Options->File Options**.

Audio File Properties

All audio files, which are digital representations of analog signals, have several properties that may be of interest depending on how you use the audio files. The key properties we'll discuss are:

Stereo vs. Mono

All speech engines create mono audio files. When encoding to some audio formats, you may be given the option to encode to Stereo files. This is normally not recommended since it increases the size of the file while not really changing the sound or fidelity of the file at all. However, depending on the hardware or software you use the audio files in, there are rare cases where Stereo must be specified. For example, there are some CD burning products that can ONLY work with Stereo MP3 files, although this is rare.

Sample Rate

Each voice has a native sample rate, which means that the audio samples used to create the voice were sampled at a given rate. These rates range from 8kHz to 22kHz. Voices are available as follows:

- **8 kHz** – 8kHz Microsoft voices, 8kHz AT&T voices, 8kHz Neospeech voices
- **11kHz** – L&H Free Voices
- **16kHz** – Cepstral, 16kHz AT&T, 16kHz Neospeech voices
- **22kHz** – Normal Microsoft Mary, Mike, and Sam

These sample rates do not necessarily indicate a higher quality sound, however 16kHz AT&T voices do sound better than 8kHz AT&T Voices. But, 16kHz AT&T voices sound much better than 22kHz Microsoft voices, so higher sample rates do not necessarily mean better sound.

Bit Rates

When encoding to WMA or MP3 files, you'll also be given the chance to choose Bitrates. These loosely specify the amount of data packed into the file for every second of audio. Traditionally, when dealing with music, the higher the bit rate, the better the sound and the larger the file. However, when dealing with audio files generated from speech, higher Bitrates do not always produce better sounding files. This has to do with conversion between sample rates and noise that can be added during the encoding.

Choosing Bit/Sample Rate

When creating MP3 or WMA files, you have the option under **Options->Voice and File Options->File Options** to select the Bit/Sample rate for the audio files you create.

You will notice that different combinations of Bit Rate and Sample Rate effect the quality of your MP3 and WMA files. A general rule is to choose a Bit Rate or Sample Rate that gives you the best quality, but try to keep the Bit Rate as small as possible. Smaller Bit Rates equate to smaller audio files and faster encoding time.

When choosing a sample rate, it is important to remember that high quality digital speech can be produced at much smaller sample rates than digital music. If you're planning to copy MP3 or WMA files to a hand-held device (like an MP3 Player), you may also need to check if your device requires a particular audio format. Some players, designed for digital music, only support sample rates in the 44kHz range, and may also require Stereo instead of Mono audio files.

Encoding in Stereo will significantly increase your audio file sizes and encoding times. Since the originating TTS output is truly Mono, it is best to use stereo encoding only if required by the portable device you're using.

The following table provides recommended settings for various voices.

Voice Engine	Recommended Bit / Sample Rate
Microsoft Voices	32kpbs, 22.05kHz, Mono
Lernout & Hauspie	16kpbs, 11.02kHz, Mono
8kHz AT&T Natural Voices, 8kHz NeoSpeech	16kpbs, 16kHz, Mono
16kHz AT&T Natural Voices	24kpbs, 16kHz, Mono
Cepstral Voices, 16kHz NeoSpeech Voices	24kpbs, 16kHz, Mono

Most good CD burning software can burn audio CDs from WAV and MP3 files generated by TextAloud. If you do not have audio burning software, check out MP3 CD Burner at http://www.nextup.com/partners.html

If you have Windows XP, Windows Media Player has built in Audio CD Burning Capabilities. Just choose Copy to CD or Device on the left side of the program, Drag TextAloud created audio files onto Windows Media Player, then click the Record button with a blank CD inserted into your burner.

Setting Bit/Sample Rates for WAVE Files

Normally when creating Wave files, you simply want TextAloud to keep the Wave file with the same properties that are native to the voice used. This will create the best sounding Wave files. However, there are specific applications where Wave files of a given bit/sample rate are required. Most often this is when the audio file is going to be used on specific hardware, such as telephone related applications. In these cases, TextAloud has the capability to create Wave files of given attributes.

To enable this feature, you must set TextAloud to use SAPI5 Only for SAPI Version under **Options->Voice and File Options->Engines/Voices**. Once this is set, if you choose the File Options TAB, you can change the Bit/Sample Rate while specifying WAVE for the file type. Note that because conversion to non-native bit/sample rates is required, the resulting Wave file may not sound as good as it did when the default was chosen, but this will allow you to create Wave files of a specific format.

NOTE: One special note about audio files. By default, TextAloud writes a couple of seconds of extra silence on the end of each audio file. This has to do with some potential uses of audio files. For example, some MP3 players will "pre-switch" to the next audio file a couple of seconds early, cutting off the end of the previous audio file, or cutting off the last sentence sometimes in the case of speech files. To work around this problem, by default TextAloud adds the extra silence on the end of each audio file. This behavior can be changed so the silence isn't added. Contact support@nextup.com for details.

Creating Audio Files

The first step to creating audio files is to verify settings related to audio files found at **Options->Voice And File Options->File Options**. File types and bit rate settings are detailed above. The **File Output Directory** is where you would like the audio files to be placed once created. Click the Browse button to locate or create a directory to place the audio files in. After files are created, you can open Windows explorer to that directory to see and play audio files.

The **Write To File Speed** specifies how quickly TextAloud should try to create the audio files. Choosing 1x means that TextAloud will create the audio files slowly, at the same speed it would take to speak the file aloud. Many voices and computers are capable of creating audio files much faster than this, but the faster the setting, the greater amount of your CPU power TextAloud will consumer during file creation. This could slow your computer if you are also doing other work while creating audio files. We recommend a setting of around 10x, then if things perform well, you can make this higher. Some voices, such as AT&T Natural Voices, will likely never reach speed over 10X, but voices with a smaller footprint such as Cepstral voices can create audio files as fast as 50x. NOTE: Write to file speed is ignored when using SAPI5 and files are created as fast as possible.

Next, verify the titles of articles you will be converting to audio files are the names you want. These Article Title's will become the filenames. For example, if you have an article titled "My E-book", then the audio file you end up with will be "My Ebook.mp3" or "My Ebook.wav".

Once these settings are verified, you are ready to create audio files from TextAloud Articles. You can create audio files by:

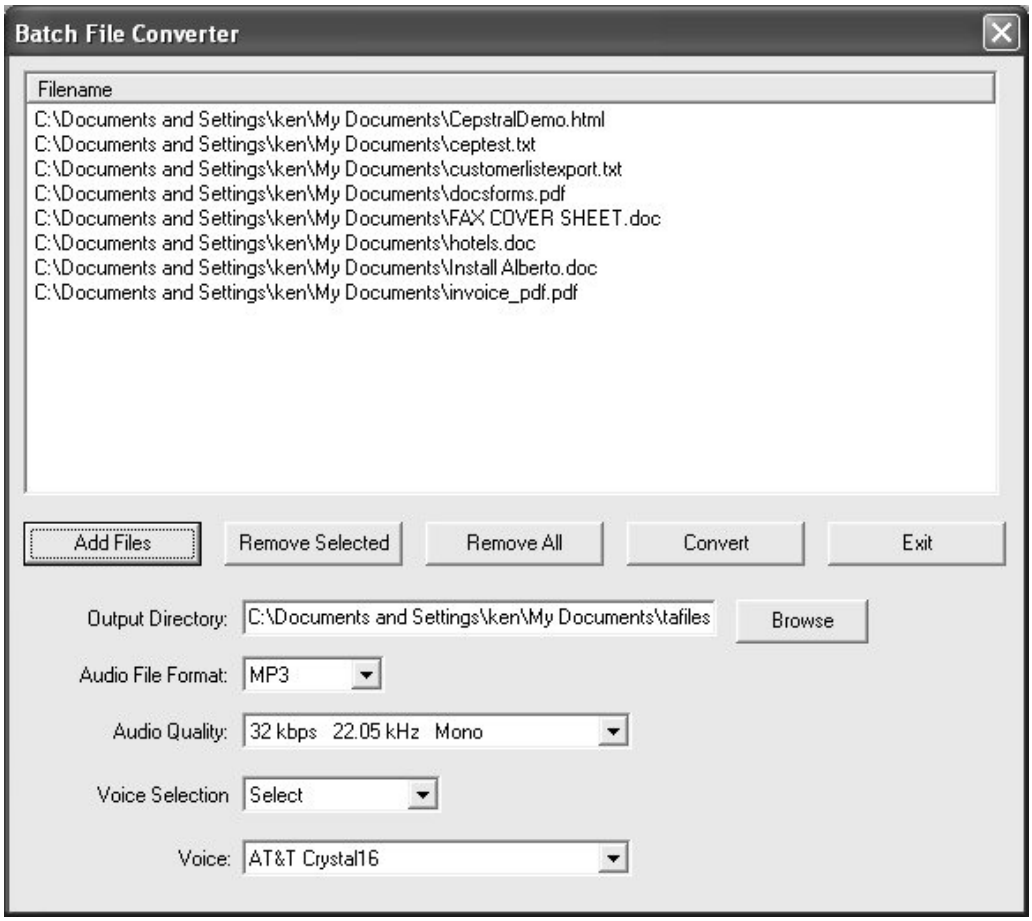
- Clicking the **<Speak To File>** button on the right side of the window below the **<Speak>** button. This will create an audio file from the current article. As with Speaking aloud, if Automatic Delete is enabled, the article will be deleted from TextAloud after the audio file is created.

- Clicking the **<To File>** toolbar icon on the main window toolbar or the floating toolbar, or clicking **Speak->Speak All Articles To File** will cause all articles to be spoken to audio files. Under **Options->TextAloud Options->Article Options** in the Multi Article section, there is an option as to whether all articles are written to a single audio file, or to multiple audio files. If set to single file, the article title of the first article will become the audio file name, and the voice specified for the first file will be used for all articles. The typical and recommended setting for this is Multiple Files, so that each article becomes its own audio file.

While audio files are being created, the Status Bar will provide status information so you can watch the progress. When using a SAPI4 voice, word highlighting still functions when creating audio files, and % complete is shown. Because of limitations with SAPI5, during audio file creation with SAPI5 voices, word highlighting is disabled and only the amount of audio data written is displayed during file creation.

Batch Audio File Conversion

There are times when you may have several document files that you want to convert to audio files all at once. The TextAloud Batch File Conversion utility, found via **File->Batch File Converter** gives you the chance to select multiple documents for conversion at once.



The **Batch File Converter** window is shown above. To convert several files as once, click the **<Add Files>** button to select files to be converted, set details about the audio files in the fields provided, and then click **<Convert>**. A popup window will show progress of creating the audio files. Fields and buttons on this window are:

- **Add Files Button** – Opens a File->Open style dialog and allows you to select .txt, .rtf, .html, .doc, and .pdf files to add to the list of files to convert.

- **Remove Selected** – If you add a file to the list that you decide not to convert, select the file in the list and click this button.

- **Remove All** – Clears the file list.

- **Convert** – Starts the batch conversion process, creating an audio file from each of the files.
- **Exit** – Cancels the batch conversion and closes the window.
- **Output Directory** – The directory where created audio files should be placed. Use the Browse button to select/create directory.
- **Audio File Format** – Select WAV, MP3, or WMA.
- **Audio Quality** – This is the Bit/Sample Rate Setting for the audio file.
- **Voice Selection** – Choices are:
    - **Select** – This means the voice specified in the Voice dropdown below will be used for all documents.
    - **Random** – Each document will be spoken with a randomly selected voice.
    - **Round Robin** – Enabled voices will be rotated.

Using Audio Files

Once you've created audio files with TextAloud, they will be stored in the File Output Directory and will be available for use. By opening Windows Explorer to that directory, you'll see the list of audio files, and by double-clicking one of the audio files, it will play within your default audio player.

Emailing Audio Files

You may wish to attach audio files to emails you send friends and co-workers. When doing this, it is generally important to keep audio files small by using WMA or MP3 formats. Details of how to attach and audio file to an email vary depending on what email program or site you use. Generally, when composing a new email, there will be a menu item or toolbar icon (often shown as a paper clip) to attach a file to the email. Click this item and browse to the file output directory and select the file you wish to include. When the email is received, the reader can click the attachment to hear the audio file in their default audio player.

Alternatively, with some email programs, you can open Windows explorer and locate the audio file of interest, right-click that file, and choose **Send To->Mail Recipient** to launch a new message with the audio file automatically attached.

Using in Portable Audio Players (MP3 Players)

The most popular use of TextAloud created audio files is to listen to them away from the computer on portable audio players, such as iPods or other MP3 players. If you do not yet have a portable player, these range in price from $75 to several hundred dollars. TextAloud created audio files will work in any portable player supporting the MP3 format. In addition, some players will also support WMA files. To view a few of the players we have tested, visit

http://www.nextup.com/TextAloud/mp3players.html

Each portable mp3 player has its own method for moving audio files from your computer to the player. TextAloud will not automatically do this for you. Some players will show up as a new disk drive (for example, E:\) when connected to the computer. Others may have their own transfer software or use programs like Windows media player to handle the transfer. Read the documentation that came with the player to understand how to transfer audio files. In general, transferring TextAloud created audio files to a portable player will be identical to transferring music files to it.

When creating MP3 files, TextAloud will place additional information into the file. These info fields are called ID3 Tags. For music files they are typically used to specify Song title, Artist, Genre, etc. Many portable players will display this information. For TextAloud created files, the article title will be displayed along with some other information such as the voice used.

Burning files to CD

Audio files may also be burned to CD to use portably. There are two distinct types of CDs you may create:

MP3 CD – There are specialized CD players, both portable and for automobiles, which have the capability to play MP3 files directly. These CD Players will specifically mention MP3 files in their documentation and possibly on the front of the player. The advantage of having this type of player is a standard data CD filled with MP3 files can be created and used. Since MP3 files are very small, you could have a CD with hundreds of audio files to listen to, as opposed to the 20 or so audio tracks you can put on standard audio CDs.

The important thing to remember with MP3 CDs is that they must be played back in a special type of CD player, and that you burn them just as you would any data CD, just filling the CD with MP3 files.

Standard Audio CDs – Standard audio CDs (technically known as "Red Book") are specially formatted CDs containing up to 32 tracks of uncompressed audio with a 44kHz sample rate. Burning an Audio CD is different that creating a data CD in that the audio files must be converted to a specific format. Most CD burning software products can handle taking TextAloud files and creating audio CDs from them. While Audio CDs can handle only about an hour of audio and up to 32 tracks, the advantage of Audio CDs is that they can be played in any CD player.

If you do not have CD Burning software, visit

http://www.nextup.com/partners.html

to try one. If you have Windows XP, Windows media player has built in burning capabilities.

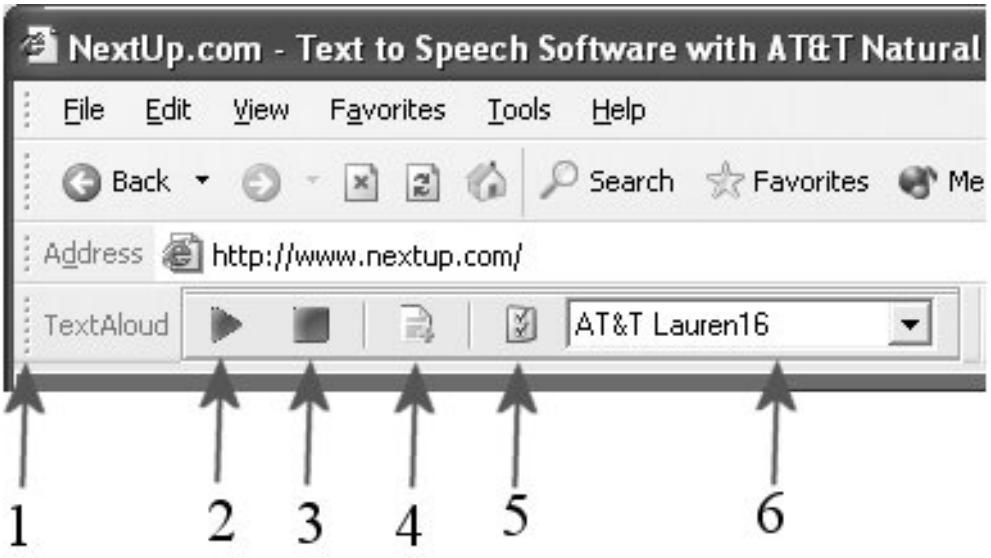
One important note about creating audio CDs relates to the earlier discussion of Bit/Sample Rates. Audio CDs are 44kHz audio. Speech engines have sample rates lower than this, so somewhere in the process from speech engine to audio CD, the sample rate must be converted. This conversion can introduce noise in the audio, so you may find that the audio CD doesn't sound as good as the audio file did when first produced. Experimentation with different settings and different burning software can often improve results. If you need help, email us at support@nextup.com.

12.0 Internet Explorer Plug-In

Users often wish to listen to information found on web pages, such as news stories. To make this process easier, TextAloud includes an Internet Explorer Plug-In. This adds a TextAloud toolbar available within TextAloud, providing shortcuts to TextAloud functionality only a mouse click away within Internet Explorer (abbreviated "IE").

NOTE: After first installing TextAloud, before the Internet Explorer Plug-In will be available, you must reboot (restart Windows).

To use the TextAloud Internet Explorer Plug-In, you must first display it within Internet Explorer. To do this, within Internet Explorer, click **View->Toolbars->TextAloud** on the IE main menu. The TextAloud toolbar will be displayed in the toolbar area of IE as depicted below:



Items in the toolbar and their functions are:

- **1 – Toolbar Movement Bar** – Grab this bar to move the TextAloud toolbar to a different location within the IE toolbar area.

- **2 – Speak Button** – Click this button to speak text from the displayed web page. If you haven't highlighted any text on the page, the entire page will be spoken. If you highlight only a portion of text on the page, that portion will be spoken. Text is not added as an article within TextAloud's main window.

- **3 – Stop Button** – Stops any current speaking.

- **4 – Create Article Button** – Click this button to add text as a new article within TextAloud's Main Window. If you have highlighted a portion of text in on the web page, then that text will be the contents of the new article. If no text is highlighted, the new article will contain all text on the web page.

- **5 – Display Option Menu** – Click this button to display the TextAloud Plug-In Options Menu. Choices on this menu are:

    - **TextAloud Options** – Displays the TextAloud Options window.

    - **Voice and File Options** – Displays the Voice and File Options Window.

    - **Hide/Show TextAloud Window** – Clicking this will minimize the TextAloud Main Window, if it is displayed, or show the TextAloud Main Window if it is minimized.

    - **About** – Displays the TextAloud Help->About Window.

- **6 – Voice Selection** – Use this Voice Dropdown to select the voice to be used when speaking text using the Speak Button.

The TextAloud IE Plug-In uses the TextAloud main program to accomplish most of its tasks, so if TextAloud is not running and you access the toolbar, you may notice TextAloud starting and then going to the system tray.

While text is speaking within Internet Explorer, word highlighting is not possible. If you wish to see word highlighting with text from web pages, consider using the **Proofread HotKey**, detailed in the **HotKey Reference** section.

13.0 Working with E-Books and other Large Text Files

One popular use of TextAloud is to create your own audio books. E-Books, or computer based books continue to gain in popularity. There are now several sites on the internet offering free download of text versions of books. Check out:

- http://www.promo.net/pg/
- http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/
- http://www.google.com/search?q=free+text+books

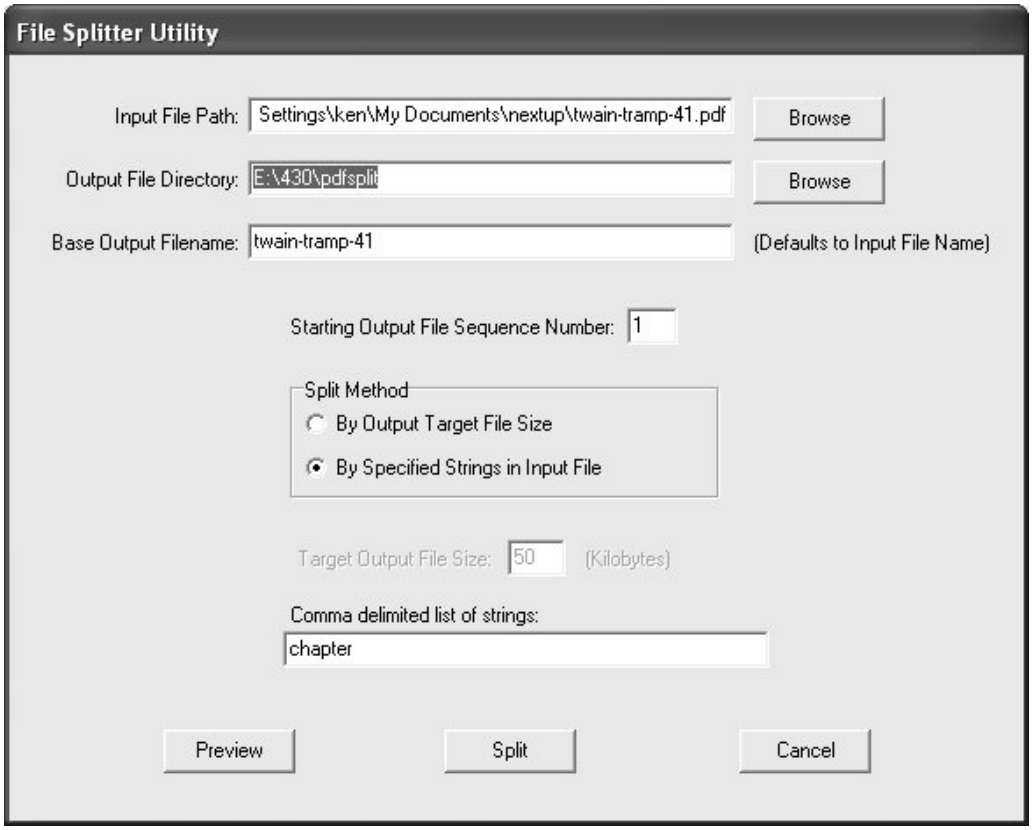
These and other sites typically have full texts of popular, older books available for download. They will often have entire books in a single text file. Converting texts that large directly to an audio file can cause problems. These problems include:

- Some voice engines have problems with very large texts
- When creating audio files, WAVE files are created, even if eventually you are converting to MP3 or WMA. These Wave files are very large, and with large books, the Wave file can quickly consumer all of your disk space, leading to errors.
- The resulting MP3 or WMA file from a very large book is often much too large to be moved to portable player as a single file or too large to burn to audio CD.

To work around these problems, you should break up very large books into smaller sections or chapters. This corrects the potential problems above by allowing you to work with smaller files, and eventually ending up with multiple audio files which can be managed more easily.

File Splitter Utility

TextAloud includes a text file splitter utility to assist in breaking up large text files into smaller, more manageable chunks. To access this utility, choose **File->File Splitter Utility** on the main menu. This will display the **File Splitter Utility Window**:



In some ways, the File Splitter Utility works external to TextAloud. It allows you to take a single large document (of any of the TextAloud supported file types) and to easily split it into multiple smaller text files. This splitting can be done by size, so that each new section is the same size, or by keyword, so that you may break up each chapter into its own file. The new, chapter text files are placed in the specified output directory, and can then be imported into TextAloud via **File->**Open or converted with the Batch File Converter. Actions and options on the File Splitter Utility are:

- **Input File Path** – This is the large file you would like to split. Any .txt, .rtf, .html, .doc, or .pdf file can be specified.

- **Output File Directory** – This is where you'd like TextAloud to place the new smaller text files that will be created.

- **Base Output Filename** – Each new "chapter" file to be created will be have a given base name, plus a sequence number. So for example, if you put Base Output Name of "MyBook", and the file splitter creates 3 files, the new files will be named MyBook001.txt, MyBook002.txt, and MyBook003.txt.

- **Starting Output File Sequence Number** – This is the number to start the sequencing with. As above, with this set to 1, the first file would be called MyBook001.txt. If you had specified 5 as the starting number, the first file would be called MyBook005.txt.

- **Split Method** – The file splitter has two different methods of splitting files. When By Output Target Size is selected, each output file will be the same size and contain the same amount of text. For example, if you put 5K for the Target Output File Size, then the first 5Kbytes of the input file will go to MyBook001.txt, and the next 5K would go to MyBook002.txt.

  The other method of splitting is to look for certain keywords to signal a spot in the file to split. For example, you may see that your input file is a book at the start of each Chapter, the work "Chapter" is present. By splitting by keyword and then putting chapter into the comma delimited list of strings field, then each time the word chapter is found in the input document, a new split "chapter" file will be created.

- **Preview** – Click this to see an estimate of how many new files will be created by the split. This gives you a chance to verify settings make sense and that you will get a reasonable number of files to work with after the split.

- **Split** – This will perform the file split based on the above settings.

- **Cancel** – Closes this window.

Copy Protected E-Books

Some e-books, particularly those you purchase, may not be in a .txt format. The most popular formats are protected PDF files, and Microsoft Reader .lit files. These file have been protected by their authors to prevent users from extracting the text, in order to protect their copyrights and prevent people from giving away or posting the books on the internet. TextAloud cannot directly read the text of these types of e-books. However, you may still have options for listening to these books.

Microsoft Reader has some built-in limited speech capabilities. Using this speak function in Microsoft Reader, the text will be spoken by the default Windows voice. You can change the selected default voice via the Speech icon in the Windows control panel. It will support any SAPI5 voice, including those sold by NextUp.com.

Adobe Reader also has similar speech functionality, but there are also other options. A program called SolidPDF, available at

http://www.nextup.com/partners.html

has the ability to extract text from protected PDF files, allowing you to import it into TextAloud.

There are other, less popular formats of e-books which may present challenges for extracting text. If you run into a problem, email us at support@nextup.com.

14.0 Reading Scanned Text

We often get questions about how users can take printed materials, books or other documents that are not available in electronic versions, and have those read by TextAloud. TextAloud cannot directly read these items. However, there are products that can assist with this process. The text must first be scanned into the computer using a scanner. Then those images must be processed by software called Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to be converted to text files, which TextAloud can then read.

NextUp.com does not at this time sell software to manage this process, but there are a few products available to accomplish this. Some of these products may be available with the scanner you purchase, or may need to be purchased separately:

- TextBridge OCR - http://www.scansoft.com/textbridge/
- OmniPage - http://www.scansoft.com/omnipage/
- ABBY FineReader - http://www.abbyy.com/
- Presto OCR - http://www.newsoftinc.com/index.htm
- ReadIris Pro - http://www.irisusa.com/products/readiris/pc/index.html

Using these products to convert scanned text to .txt files will then allow you to import the text into TextAloud to be spoken or to create audio files from them.

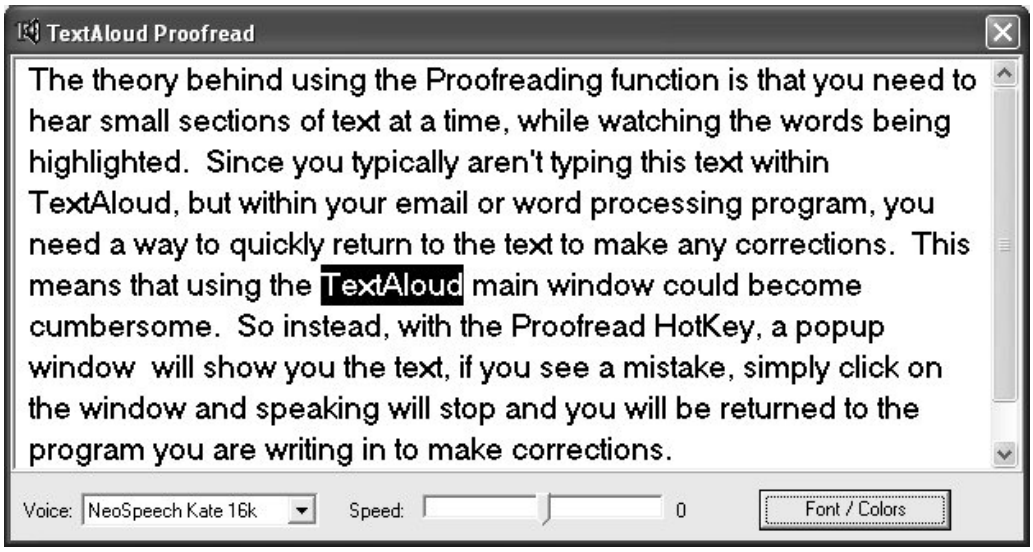
15.0 Proofreading with TextAloud

An often overlooked use for TextAloud is to help proofread. Spell Checkers within word processors and email clients help correct many common typing and spelling errors, but do little to correct other common problems such as typing the wrong word, leaving out words, or poorly constructed sentences. Proofreading the old fashioned way is often in ineffective too, because our brains are so adept at reading that we will often not catch mistakes. But hearing our own written words spoken back to us in another voice will almost always alert us to mistakes.

To assist with this proofreading task, TextAloud has a special Proofread HotKey and Popup Proofreading window. Via **Options->HotKey Setup** you can set a keyboard combination that will activate the proofreading window. Choose something obscure to insure other programs will not be using the combination. We suggest using Control-Shift-Alt-P, but you can experiment with any combination that works for you.

The theory behind using the Proofreading function is that you need to hear small sections of text at a time, while watching the words being highlighted. Since you typically aren't typing this text within TextAloud, but within your email or word processing program, you need a way to quickly return to the text to make any corrections. This means that using the TextAloud main window could become cumbersome. So instead, with the Proofread HotKey, a popup window will show you the text, if you see a mistake, simply click on the window and speaking will stop and you will be returned to the program you are writing in to make corrections.

To demonstrate this process, assume you are typing a document in your word processor such as Microsoft Word. Once the document or a section of the document is complete and you are ready to proofread, return to the top and highlight a paragraph. Next, hit the Proofread HotKey combination (Control-Alt-Shift-P for example). The TextAloud Proofreading Window will appear as shown below:


TextAloud Proofread
The theory behind using the Proofreading function is that you need to hear small sections of text at a time, while watching the words being highlighted. Since you typically aren't typing this text within TextAloud, but within your email or word processing program, you need a way to quickly return to the text to make any corrections. This means that using the TextAloud main window could become cumbersome. So instead, with the Proofread HotKey, a popup window will show you the text, if you see a mistake, simply click on the window and speaking will stop and you will be returned to the program you are writing in to make corrections.
Voice: NeoSpeech Kate 16k
Speed:
0
Font / Colors

Text from the highlighted paragraph will immediately begin speaking as words are highlighted. You can customize the size of the window, voice and speed used, as well as Font and Colors used for the text. These settings will be remembered for future use. Most users will increase speed to slightly faster than normal listening since this is text they are already familiar with.

If while listening and watching the text you find a mistake, simply click anywhere within the text area of this window and speaking will stop and the window disappears, returning you to your word processor. Correct the mistake you found, and repeat the process. If no mistake is found, when the paragraph is complete, the window disappears and you are ready to repeat the process with the next paragraph, until the document is completed. This process will greatly cut down on mistakes in your writing.

16.0 Advanced Features

Changing TextAloud Appearance through Skins

Skins is a term popularized by music related programs such as WinAmp. The idea behind skins is that you can drastically change the appearance of a program by applying a new "skin" to the application, changing colors and in some cases shapes of the windows and graphical elements.

TextAloud has the ability to support a varied set of skins to change the look of the program. These skins primarily change the color applied to non-text areas within TextAloud, and the shape of the outer boundaries of the windows. To change the appearance of TextAloud, click **View->Skins** on the main menu. Select one of the included skins and then click Test to see the changes it would apply. Additional skins are available for download at

http://www.nextup.com/skins.html

NOTE: When sight-impaired users are using TextAloud in combination with a screen reader, the Skins setting should be left to None. Some skins can interfere with the correct operation of screen readers.

Customizing Toolbars

TextAloud includes two toolbars. These are on the Main Window just below the main menu, and the floating toolbar. There are 3 options for the look of these toolbars:

- Large Icons with Captions
- Large Icons
- Small Icons

The default setting for both is Large Icons with Captions. This is the suggested setting while you are first learning TextAloud. After learning the functions of each icon, feel free to change to remove captions or go to small icons decrease the size of the TextAloud window. You may also choose to completely hide the main toolbar.

To customize the Main Window Toolbar, choose **View->Toolbar** on the main menu. Here you will have the option to Hide/Show the toolbar, as well as select size and caption setting as mentioned above.

To customize the floating toolbar, choose **Options->TextAloud Options->Miscellaneous** and change the settings:

- **Show Floating Toolbar** – You can set when or if the floating toolbar should be displayed
- **Floating Toolbar Style** – Same options as with the main toolbar related to size and captions.
- **Floating Toolbar Always On Top** – Determines whether the floating toolbar should remain above other windows and visible when displayed.

Bookmarks

To assist when working in longer articles, TextAloud allows you to set bookmarks within the text, then easily return to those bookmarks using menu commands. This can help when jumping back and forth between different sections, or will allow you to mark the spot in a long document where you stopped listening so that next time you come back to TextAloud you can jump to that spot and then do the Read From Cursor command.

To Create a bookmark within an article, click to the spot in the article then select **Edit->Add Bookmark** or right-click in the text area and choose **Add Bookmark** on the popup menu. You will be prompted for a name of the bookmark. This name will be shown in menus, so use something that will help you identify that spot in the text if using multiple bookmarks within a single article. TextAloud will insert text into the article similar to

{{Bookmark=My Bookmark Name}}

This text will not be spoken, but is used internally by TextAloud to manage bookmarks. Be careful to not change this text. Deleting this text will delete the bookmark.

After one or more bookmarks are created, you can jump to that spot in the text at any time (even while TextAloud is speaking) by choosing **Edit->Go To Bookmark->(bookmark name)** or by right-clicking in the text area and choosing **Go To Bookmark**.

HotKey Reference

TextAloud HotKeys are global key combinations that can perform TextAloud actions anytime TextAloud is running, regardless of whether the TextAloud window is displayed or not. Because these key combinations are global (meaning available throughout Windows regardless of what program you are working in), it is important that you choose somewhat obscure key combinations to insure they work correctly. This is because the keys you choose must not already have special meaning within the other programs you work in or that may be running on your computer.

These key combinations are combinations of Control, Alt, and Shift keys plus some other key on your keyboard. In general we recommend that the combinations include all three of these to insure other programs do not use them.

Here is an example using the Stop HotKey that will demonstrate the usage of global HotKeys. Under **Options->HotKey Setup** you'd define the Stop HotKey to be Control-Alt-Shift-Q. You would do this by choosing Q on the dropdown list to the right of the Stop key. These key dropdowns typically show None when not enabled. Next, check the checkboxes for Control, Alt, and Shift.

After defining this, start TextAloud speaking a long article, then minimize TextAloud. Now hold down the Control, Alt, and Shift keys, and press the Q key while those are down. TextAloud will stop speaking. As described, the HotKey performs the Stop action in TextAloud even when you aren't interacting with the TextAloud window or when that window isn't even displayed.

It is important to note however, that TextAloud must be running, either in the system tray or with the window displayed for HotKeys to perform. If TextAloud is completely closed and not running in the system tray, defined HotKeys have no effect.

The 5 available TextAloud HotKey actions are:

- **Import New** – When working in any program where you can highlight text, pressing the Import New HotKey combination will cause highlighted text to automatically be imported into TextAloud as a New Article. If you happen to be in single article mode with automatic speaking turned on, the text would be spoken. We recommend setting this HotKey as Control-Alt-Shift-N.

- **Speak Text** – When working in any program where you can highlight text, pressing the Speak Text HotKey combination will cause TextAloud to speak the highlighted text. Text will not be imported into or shown in the TextAloud window. We recommend setting this HotKey as Control-Alt-Shift-S.

- **Pause/Resume Speaking** – If TextAloud is speaking when this HotKey is pressed, speaking will be paused just as if you'd selected **Speak->Pause** on the TextAloud main menu. Once speaking is paused, pressing this combination again will resume speaking. This is helpful for temporarily pausing TextAloud quickly, for example, if the phone rings while listening. We recommend setting this HotKey as Control-Alt-Shift-R.

- **Stop Speaking** – When this HotKey combination is pressed, if TextAloud is speaking, the speaking will immediately be stopped just as if you'd selected **Speak->Stop** on the TextAloud main menu. We recommend setting this hotkey to Control-Alt-Shift-Q.

- **Proofread** – Proofreading is discussed in detail in the **Proofreading With TextAloud** section. When working in any program where you can highlight text, pressing the Proofread HotKey combination will cause a popup window to be displayed showing the highlighted text, and the text will be spoken with word highlighting. Clicking anywhere in the text area of this window will stop speaking and close the window. We recommend setting this HotKey as Control-Alt-Shift-P.

Each HotKey is defined under **Options->HotKey Setup**. You first select a letter or number from the dropdown list on the far right for each item, then check any or all of Control, Alt, and Shift to complete the HotKey specification.

If after defining HotKeys you find that they do not seem to work, or some other program seems to react to the combination, try changing the combination. Some experimentation may be required depending on other programs in use on your computer. More obscure combinations including Control, Alt, and Shift seem to be safer and less often interfered with.

Customizing Shortcut Keys

Shortcut keys are commonly used in almost all Windows programs. These key combinations are quick ways to perform common tasks, and are linked to menu items. When you look at a menu in a Windows program, to the right of the menu item, you'll frequently see shortcut keys defined. Within TextAloud, most menu items have shortcut keys. For example, if you look at the **File** menu on the TextAloud main menu, you'll see items such as:

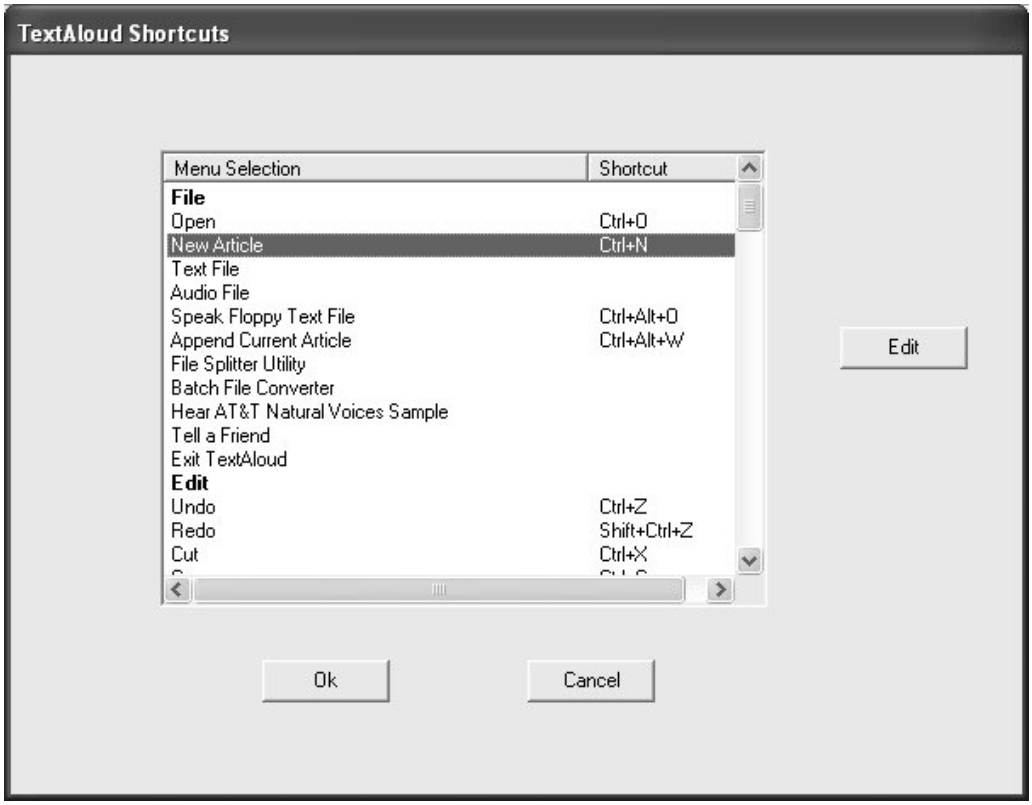
- **Open Ctrl-O**
- **New Article Ctrl-N**

In this case, Control-O is a shortcut to the **File->Open** menu item. While working within the TextAloud program, holding down the Control button and pressing O will open the File Open dialog just as if you had pressed **File->Open**.

Learning these shortcut keys can greatly speed your work within TextAloud. More importantly, for sight-impaired users, shortcut keys provide their only means of performing some actions, since mouse usage is limited.

TextAloud includes pre-defined shortcut keys for the most frequently used menu items. However, not all menu items have shortcuts, and some users may wish to change or adjust the shortcut keys.

If you choose **Options->Shortcut Setup**, the TextAloud Shortcuts window is shown:



The table in this window shows each menu item and its shortcut if one is defined. By selecting an item and clicking Edit, you can create or modify the shortcut defined for that item. When you click Edit a window is displayed showing the current shortcut. By actually pressing the desired shortcut, TextAloud will automatically update the displayed shortcut key. Then simply click OK to save the change. When you return to the TextAloud main window, the menu shortcuts will have been updated.

Customizing Fonts and Colors of Text

TextAloud allows users to change the font and colors used to display article text and for text highlighting. This can be important for users with low eyesight who may need larger text or may have better vision with certain color combinations.

These customizations can be done via **Options->Article Font/Text Size** on the main menu. Traditional font changes you may be familiar with through word processing programs, including changing the font, the size, and whether **Bold,** Underlined, *or Italic* are available. In addition, you can change the colors used for the text background, color of text, as well as foreground and background color used with word highlighting.

Command Line Usage

The standard version of TextAloud does not support command line arguments. However, we do offer a specialized command line tool for those needing simple external access to TextAloud type functionality. For more information on the command line version of TextAloud visit

http://www.nextup.com/cl.html

TextAloud API

We frequently receive requests for programming access to TextAloud. We have created an API for TextAloud, allowing programmers to access nearly all TextAloud features and functions via a COM Automation Server. This provides access to many programming languages including Delphi, VC++, VB, and VBScript among others. For more information on this see

http://www.nextup.com/api.html

17.0 Licensing Information

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If you have any questions, please E-mail support@NextUp.com

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Each voice sold by NextUp.com includes its own license agreement which you agree to when installing the voice. While each voice vendor's license agreement varies slightly, here are some general guidelines that apply:

When using older Microsoft voices, there are no restrictions on usage or use or redistribution of audio files created with those voices.

When using any of the premium voices, including AT&T Natural Voices, Cepstral Voices, and Neospeech voices, the voices are sold for personal use only. Most commercial uses are prohibited under the consumer license. Audio files created by these voices cannot be distributed to others under the standard consumer licenses.

NextUp.com does have commercial and redistribution licenses available for these premium voices. Pricing varies greatly by voice and proposed usage, so contact support@nextup.com for more details.

Volume, School, and Site Licensing

TextAloud is available at a discount for volume purchases. NextUp.com works with hundreds of schools and businesses to bring the power of TextAloud to their workers and students.

In the workplace, our experience has shown that TextAloud can greatly improve productivity of workers who generally have to absorb a great deal of information. When combined with portable listening, workers turn idle commute times into useful time by listening to news and information, proofreading documents, or catching up on email by listening instead of reading.

Within educational settings there are clear uses of TextAloud, including but not limited to:

- Improving reading skills for poor readers and dyslexics.
- Improved writing output through better proofreading.
- Extensive uses in English as Second Language (ESL) as well as foreign language learning.
- Providing valuable access to written words for sight-impaired students.

For volume pricing discounts and more information, contact support@nextup.com

18.0 Getting More Information and Help

In addition to this manual, there are several other information sources available to you:

- http://www.nextup.com – Our site provides product information and purchase links, as well as downloads of the latest version of TextAloud.

- support@nextup.com – Email us at any time with any questions you have. You'll find that we provide very quick and helpful responses to all email questions.

- http://nextup.com/mailinglist.html - Signup for the NextUp.com Monthly Newsletter, as well as read back issues of our Newsletter. We typically provide a tip of the month for getting more out of TextAloud, along with any info about updates and changes to the product.

- http://nextup.com/phpBB2/index.php - Our User Forum is a gathering place for TextAloud enthusiasts. Many of our existing users are more than willing to provide help regarding TextAloud and solving any problems or answer questions you may have.

- TextAloud includes a comprehensive help file available via **Help->Contents** on the TextAloud main menu, or by pressing **F1** on your keyboard within most TextAloud windows.

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